

BALTIMORE™

THE PLAGUE SHIPS



MIKE
MIGNOLA

CHRISTOPHER
GOLDEN

BEN
STENBECK

The New York Times
bestseller!

BALTIMORE

The Plague Ships





BALTIMORETM

THE PLAGUE SHIPS

VOLUME ONE

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DARK HORSE BOOKS®

For William Hope Hodgson, who had a lot to say about wrecked ships and fungus.

—Mike Mignola

For Gene Colan, the first person to show me that comics could be creepy.

—Christopher Golden

For Danny Cox and Action Man.

—Ben Stenbeck

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Special thanks to Jason Hvam and Pasquale Ruggiero

DarkHorse.com

Published by Dark Horse Books
A division of Dark Horse Comics, Inc.
10956 SE Main Street
Milwaukie, OR 97222

First edition: June 2011
ISBN 978-1-59582-673-2

1 3 5 7 9 1 0 8 6 4 2

Printed at 1010 Printing International, Ltd., Guangdong Province, China

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This volume collects the *Baltimore: The Plague Ships* comic-book series,
issues #1–#5, published by Dark Horse Comics.

BACK FROM THE DEAD

by
JOE HILL



1.

LET'S PLAY AN ASSOCIATIVE GAME. Clear your head. I'll drop a word on you, and you say the first thing that comes to mind. Or, if you're reading this graphic novel on a crowded train, you can just whisper to yourself. Ready? Here goes:

Comics.

Mm-hm. You said "Superman," right? Or was it "Batman"? Maybe, just *maybe*, you said, "capas." (Okay, sure, a couple of you out there replied with something ridiculous, like, "onward," just to show how original you are, but trust me, everyone else thought of superheroes.)

I don't know how old you are—you might be fifteen or you might be fifty—but the odds are that the comics you were raised on featured men in ill-advised tights, battling psychotic grotesqueries in the name of truth, justice, and a possible Saturday-morning cartoon. I love cape stories myself, always have. Superman and Batman are more than great characters; they are icons and archetypes, and their stories inform us about ourselves and our historical moment.

Yet we are not too far removed from a period in time when comics were known not

for their masked titans, but for their decaying fiends; when they were famous, not for stories of superpowered heroism, but supernatural perversion; not for displays of idealized sacrifice, but for *human* sacrifice. There was a moment when, if we were to play my associative word game, you might've responded to the word "comics" with "horror," or "crime," or "torture," or . . .

. . . tragically . . .

. . . "delinquency." (And yes, probably a few smartasses would've replied with "onward" or some other word that has no relationship to my prompt. But then every generation has its share of smartasses. I have occasionally been accused of being one myself, even by the cowriter of this very comic, Christopher Golden.)

I'm not going to use this space to rehash what happened to horror comics in the 1950s: psychiatrist Fredric Wertham's unscientific study purporting to show a connection between horror comics and sadistic behavior among boys, the shameless kangaroo court put together by Senator Kefauver to attack the comic-book industry (and free speech itself), the creation of the Comics Code, which shoved artists and writers into a superhero-shaped coffin and buried them alive under six feet of hysterical repression. If you want to read about it, I recommend a book titled *The Ten-Cent Plague* by David Hajdu, which methodically documents the effort to eradicate the disease of horror comics in the name of public health . . . the first skirmish in a tiresome culture war that continues to this day.¹

No, my point is this: if they weren't in such a rush to strangle the life out of the horror comics, the repression brigade might've learned a very valuable lesson from them. The departed—especially those who have suffered a cruel and unjust death—have a nasty way of opening their

¹When an outraged parent writes their newspaper to claim *Grand Theft Auto* or Eminem went and turned their child into a sulky, arrogant teenager, remember two things: (1) children turn into sulky, arrogant teenagers all on their own, without any assist from popular culture, and (2) the irate parent is repeating all the same arguments that were made against horror comics, Elvis, motorcycle movies, and (I shit you not) the hula hoop.

eyes and clawing their way out of the soil the moment you turn your back on 'em.

Somewhere in here, when no one was paying attention, horror comics came back from the dead, baby. *Hellboy. Hack/Slash. 30 Days of Night. The Goon. The Walking Dead.*

Baltimore.

Last but not least, *Baltimore*. Unapologetically: *Baltimore*.

2.

Let's say we turned my associative game around. Let's say you suggested a word, and I had to reply, honestly, with the first thing that came into my mind. And then you said, "fun."

My response would depend somewhat on when we played. If this were the fall of 2005, I would've said, "League," thinking of Alan Moore's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. If this were the winter of 2007, I would've said, "Y," mindful of Brian Vaughan's game-changing comic, *Y: The Last Man*. No matter when we played—this year or twenty-five years ago—I probably would have answered with the title of a comic book. They have a lifelong hold on me I can't explain and don't understand. They light up all the pleasure circuits . . . especially the darker comics, those stories of desperate stands against a tide of infection, madness, and the damned.

Here, in the last frozen days of 2010, my high of choice is *Baltimore: The Plague Ships*, one of the most energetic and inventive works on the aforementioned list of remarkable new horror comics.

Plague Ships expands on a story begun in *Baltimore*; or, *The Steadfast Tin Soldier and the Vampire*, an illustrated novel by Christopher Golden and Mike Mignola, which was itself a thunderous war machine of a book, a relentless bombardment of action and ideas.² But don't worry if you haven't read the novel. This comic is not a sequel, but rather a companion, a

second doorway into the same shadowy crypt. It introduces us to the grim, tireless, and really exceptionally well-armed Lord Henry Baltimore, and in less than twelve gruesome, violent, and brain-busting pages, his quest to destroy the king vampire named Haigus is *our* quest . . . and never mind that death sits on Lord Baltimore's shoulder "for those who ally themselves with him." We'll have to take our chances.

We can skip the plot summary; for Christ's sake, you're about to read the thing. Suffice it to say that *Plague Ships* moves forward with the ferocity and drive of its unstoppable protagonist, and throws at you all the visual horrors you would expect of *Hellboy* creator Mike Mignola, and all the mad, stomach-churning concepts that are the stock-in-trade of novelist Christopher Golden. Their vision is made complete by the muscular line work of artist Ben Stenbeck and the moody, chilling colors of Dave Stewart. I could mount a five-thousand-word argument to intellectually defend the excitement I feel for *Plague Ships*. I could drone on about how it operates as a fusion work, blending horror with the sensibility of steampunk sci-fi, to make a new genre (splattersteam?). I could discuss its playful riffs on classic nineteenth-century genre tropes (haunted islands, archaic submarines, Poe's red death).

But truthfully, my response to *Plague Ships* was something I felt more in my nerve endings; it was visceral, not intellectual. Stenbeck, Stewart, Golden, and Mignola had me by the third panel of page 4.

Max really should've run.

Okay. One more word-association game. I get to pick this time.

Ready?

Onward.

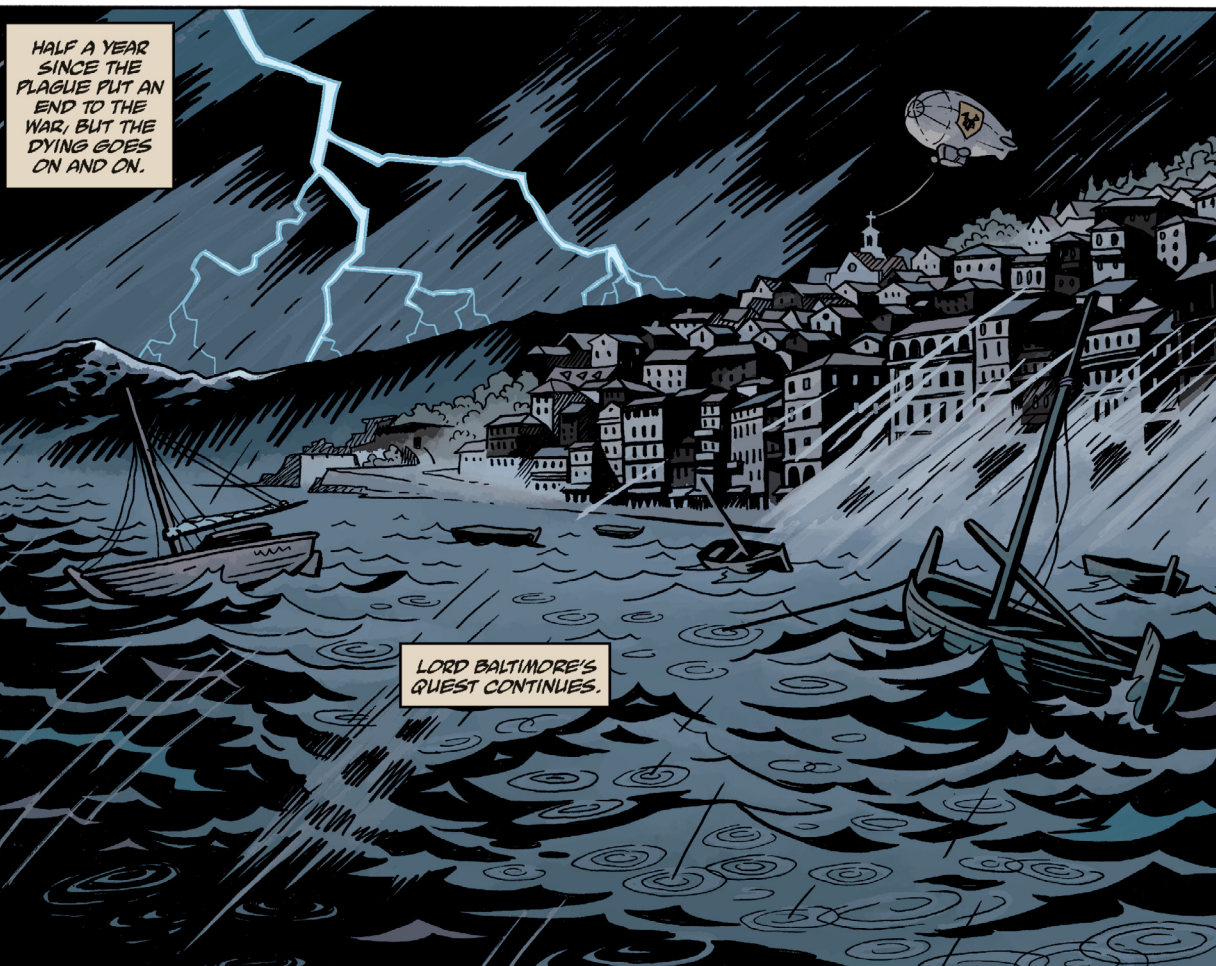
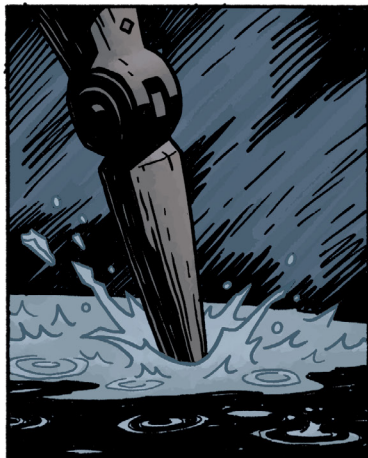
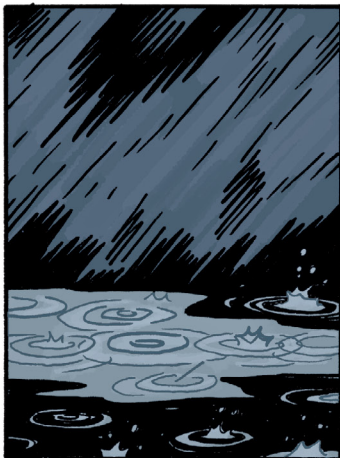
Joe Hill
New Hampshire
December 2010

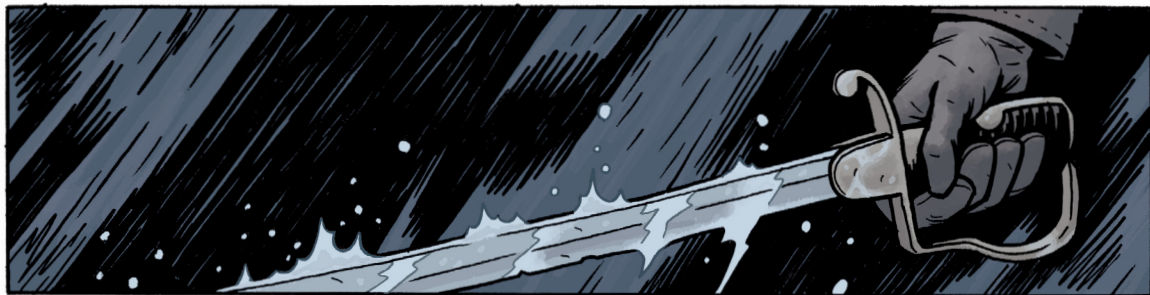
²It was also, on the level of production design, the most beautiful-looking wide-release novel published in 2007, in any genre. Seriously—this bastard had the quality and beauty of a one-hundred-dollar limited edition. If every hardcover was such a pleasure to read and hold, the e-book industry would be nowhere'sville.

CHAPTER ONE











THERE ARE
NO SHADOWS
DEEP ENOUGH
TO HIDE YOU.



MAX
DOESN'T
HIDE! MAX
DOESN'T
RUN!

YOU
DON'T
HUNT
US...



"...WE HUNT
YOU!"



MAX
SHOULD'VE
RUN.

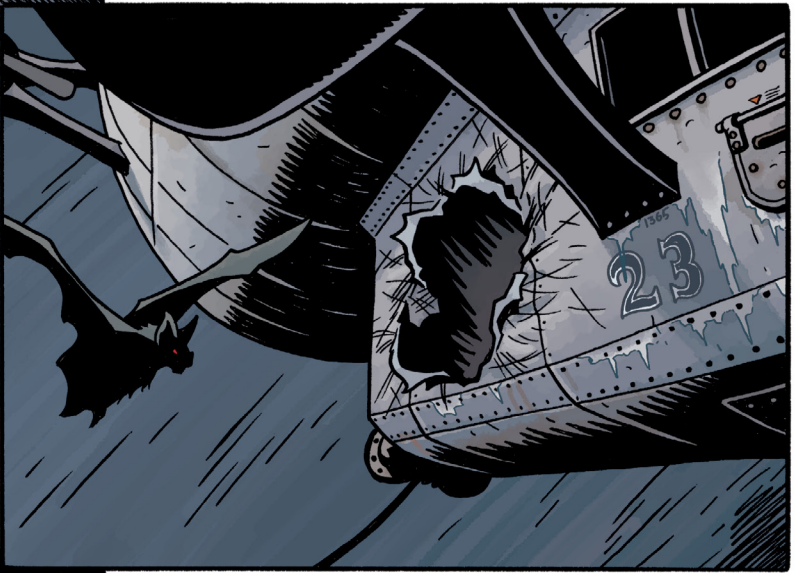
BAMM



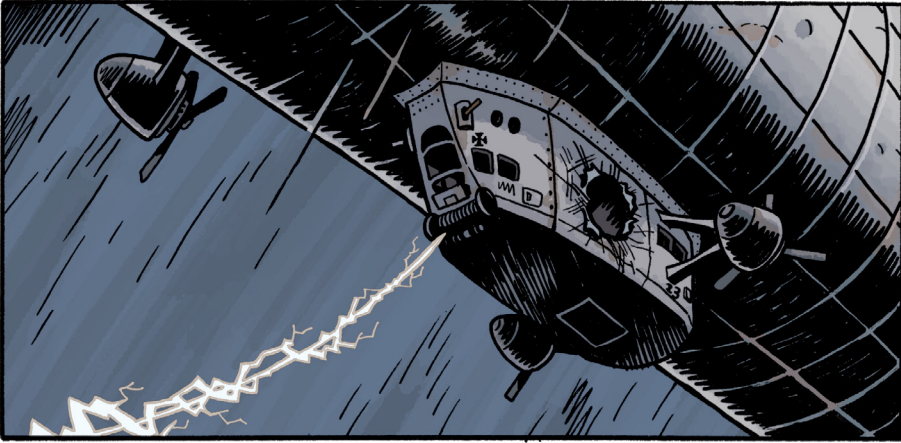
HURRY, FOOL.
THE OTHERS
WILL ESCAPE
YOU.

















PLEASE, SIR, PUT
THE BLADE AWAY.
MY GRANDMOTHER
MEANS YOU NO
HARM.



WHO
ARE YOU, GIRL?
ANOTHER
WITCH?



MY NAME IS
VANESSA KALDERAS.
AS FOR WITCHERY,
DON'T LET GRAND-
MOTHER FOOL YOU.
SHE CAN NO
MORE CALL THE
LIGHTNING
THAN--



HUSH
YOUR MOUTH,
GIRL.



IF YOU **DID** CALL THE
LIGHTNING, YOU'LL GET
NO THANKS FROM ME. I
NEEDED ONE OF THEM
ALIVE. THEIR ASHES
CAN'T TELL ME WHAT
I NEED TO KNOW.

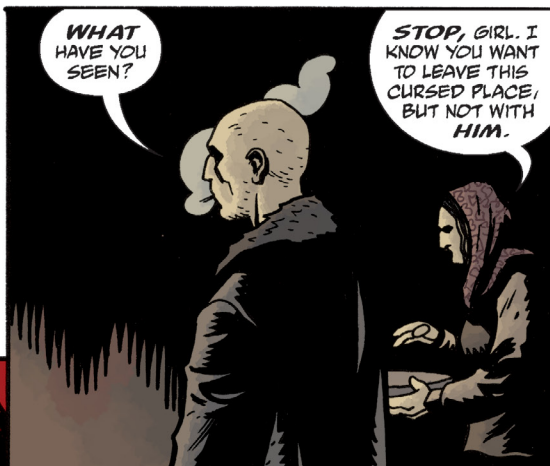


I CAN SEE YOU WERE
A GENTLEMAN ONCE,
BUT YOU'VE
OBVIOUSLY LOST
YOUR MANNERS. I
KEPT THEM FROM
ESCAPING.



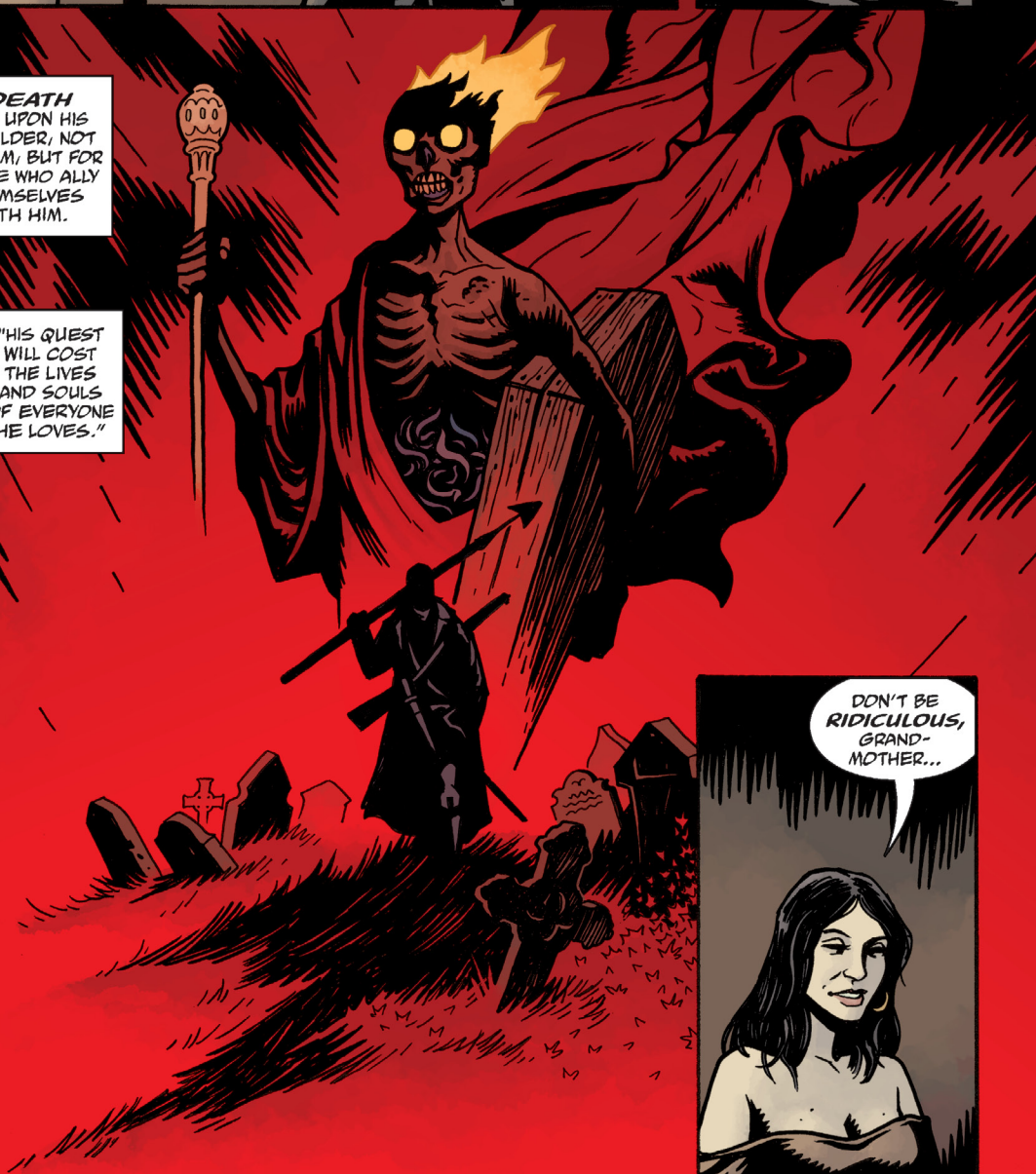
THEY
WOULDN'T HAVE
ESCAPED.





"DEATH SITS UPON HIS SHOULDER, NOT FOR HIM, BUT FOR THOSE WHO ALLY THEMSELVES WITH HIM.

"HIS QUEST WILL COST THE LIVES AND SOULS OF EVERYONE HE LOVES."



"...THE MAN JUST SCOURED THE FILTH FROM OUR HOME. THE **LEAST** WE OWE HIM IS THE TRUTH. THE ZEPPELIN CORPS WERE RECENT ARRIVALS, ONLY A FORTNIGHT AGO. **YOUR VAMPIRE WAS HERE LONG BEFORE THAT.**

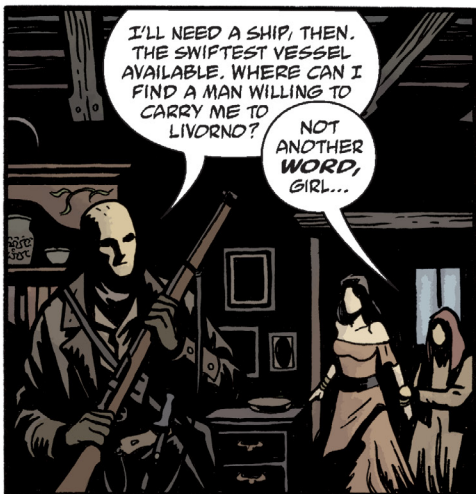


"THE PLAGUE HAD TOUCHED US **BEFORE** HE CAME, BUT IT SPREAD MUCH MORE QUICKLY AFTER HIS ARRIVAL. HE KILLED MANY, AND OTHERS HE MADE LIKE HIM. TWO NIGHTS AGO A SHIP SAILED FROM HERE BOUND FOR LIVORNO, ON THE ITALIAN COAST. WHISPERS SAY IT SAILED **AFTER DARK** BECAUSE YOUR VAMPIRE WAS ON BOARD."



"I'LL NEED A SHIP, THEN. THE SWIFTEST VESSEL AVAILABLE. WHERE CAN I FIND A MAN WILLING TO CARRY ME TO LIVORNO?"

"NOT ANOTHER WORD, GIRL..."



"...YOU HAVE TOLD HIM WHAT HE NEEDS TO KNOW."



"THIS VILLAGE HAS BEEN CURSED **ENOUGH**, SIR. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE ANYTHING MORE TO DO WITH YOU."



"DON'T LISTEN TO MY GRAND-MOTHER. I KNOW A MAN WITH A SHIP. I CAN HELP..."





...BUT
YOU'VE
GOT TO TAKE
ME WITH
YOU.



I TRAVEL
ALONE.



NO, DAMN YOU.
I TOLD YOU WHAT
YOU WANTED TO KNOW.
THIS PLACE IS NOTHING
BUT A GRAVE NOW,
SWALLOWING US ALL.
TAKE ME--

DON'T BE A
FOOL, VANESSA.
CAN'T YOU SEE
THE CURSE
THAT HANGS
OVER HIS
HEAD?



GOOD
EVENING, SIR.
DOES THIS
BELONG TO
YOU?

IT
DOES.



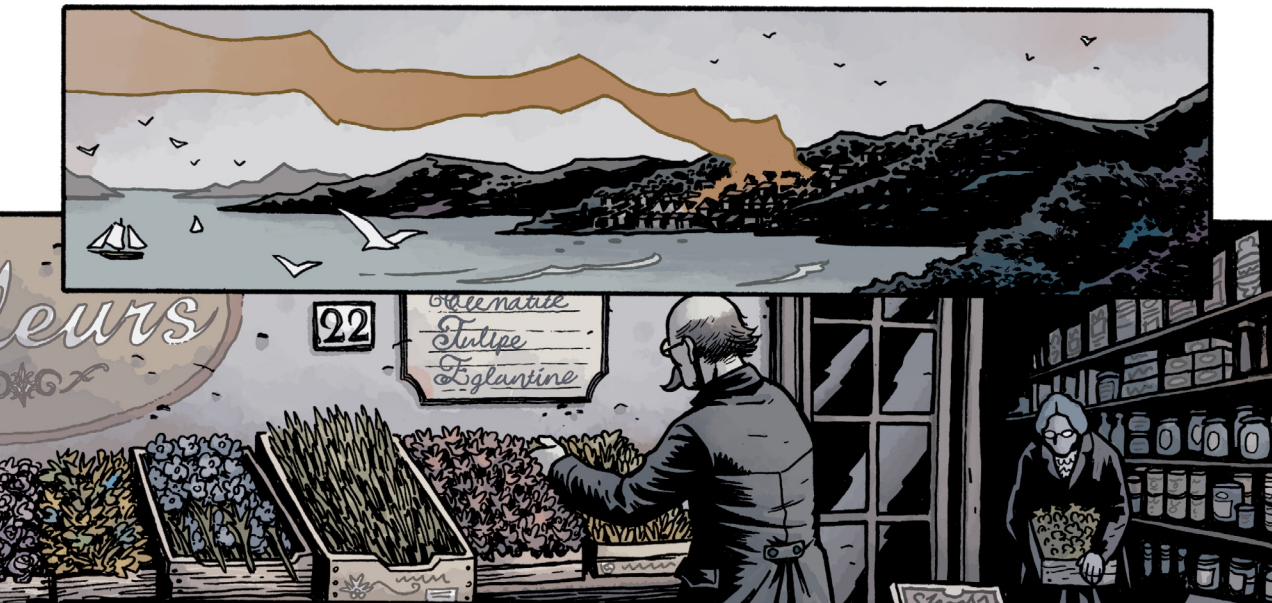
TAKE
ME WITH
YOU!

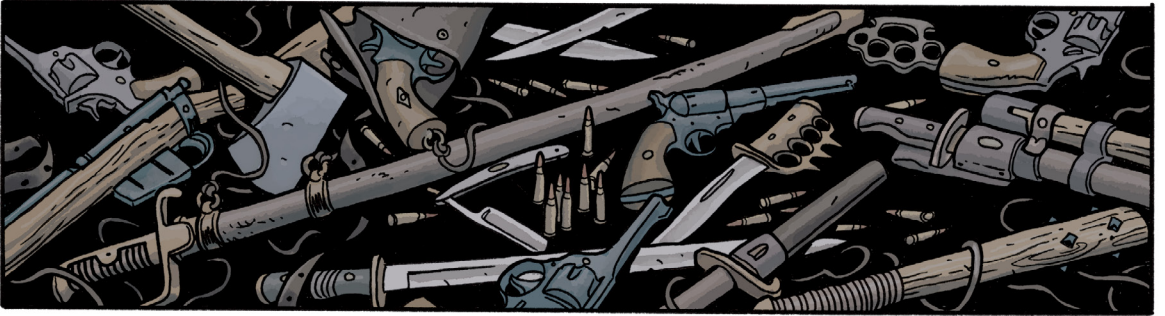


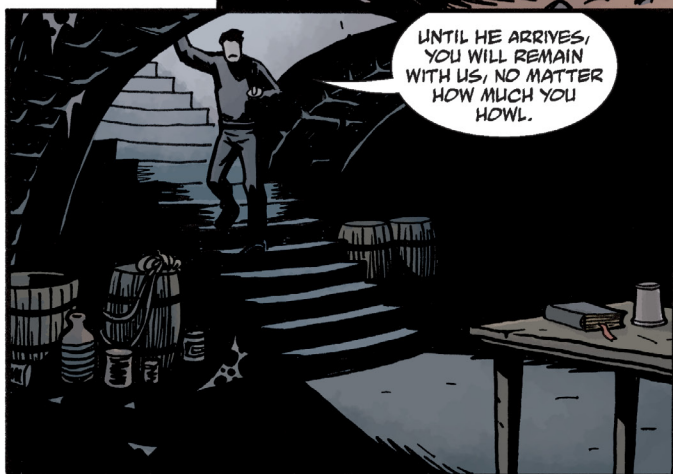
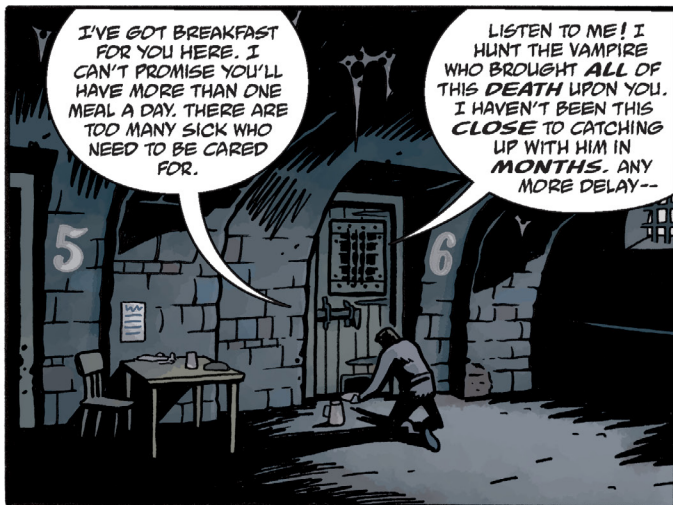
NO, YOU
FOOLS!
HE DROVE
THE EVIL
OUT!



THE DEVIL
WEARS MANY
FACES.









ANTOINE,
COME AWAY
FROM THE
WINDOW.

BUT,
MOTHER, YOU
SAID THE MAN
WITH THE WOODEN
LEG
KILLED THE
MONSTERS.



I SAID COME
AWAY FROM
THERE.

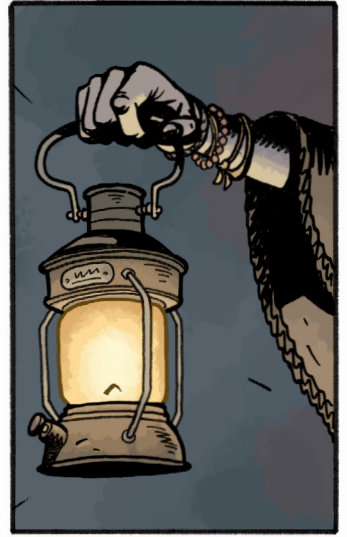


WE CAN'T
KNOW IF THE
STRANGER
KILLED THEM
ALL.



"LET SOME
OTHER
MOTHER'S
CHILD PROVE
THE NIGHT
SAFE."



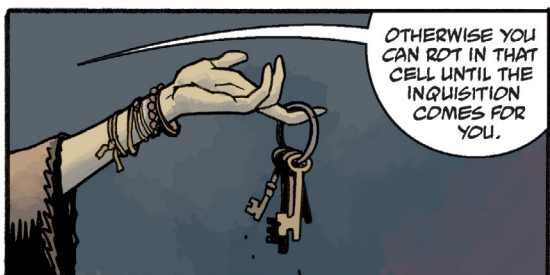




I HAVE INFLUENCE
WITH THE GUARD
AND I'VE ARRANGED
FOR A SHIP TO
TAKE YOU TO
LIVORNO.



BUT **ONLY** IF
YOU TAKE ME
WITH YOU AND
PAY FOR MY
PASSAGE AS
WELL.



OTHERWISE YOU
CAN ROT IN THAT
CELL UNTIL THE
INQUISITION
COMES FOR
YOU.



I FEAR
YOU WILL
REGRET
THIS.

THIS
PLACE IS **HELL**,
MONSIEUR.



"I'LL TAKE MY
CHANCES."

CHAPTER TWO

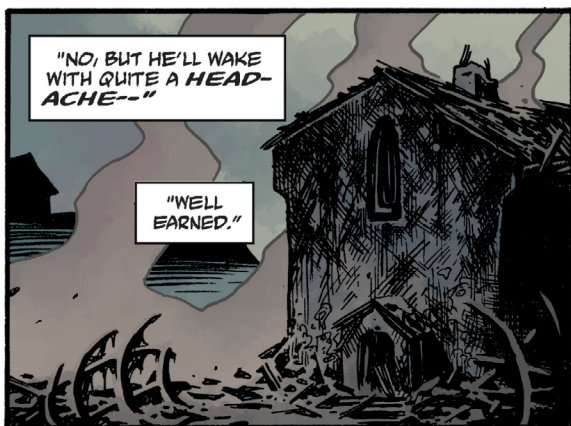




"FOR A MOMENT
I FEARED YOU
MIGHT KILL HIM."



"THE CONSTABLE IS A
FOOL, VANESSA, BUT
HE ISN'T MY ENEMY.
I DIDN'T DO HIM ANY
PERMANENT DAMAGE."



"NO, BUT HE'LL WAKE
WITH QUITE A HEAD-
ACHE--"

"WELL
EARNED."



YOU'LL GET NO
ARGUMENT FROM
ME, LORD BALTIMORE.
I JUST HOPE YOU
NEVER HAVE REASON
TO THINK OF **ME**
AS A FOOL.



FAR TOO LATE
FOR THAT. **YOU**
WERE A FOOL THE
MOMENT YOU
JOINED YOUR FATE
WITH MINE.



NOW YOU
SOUND LIKE
MY **GRAND-
MOTHER**.

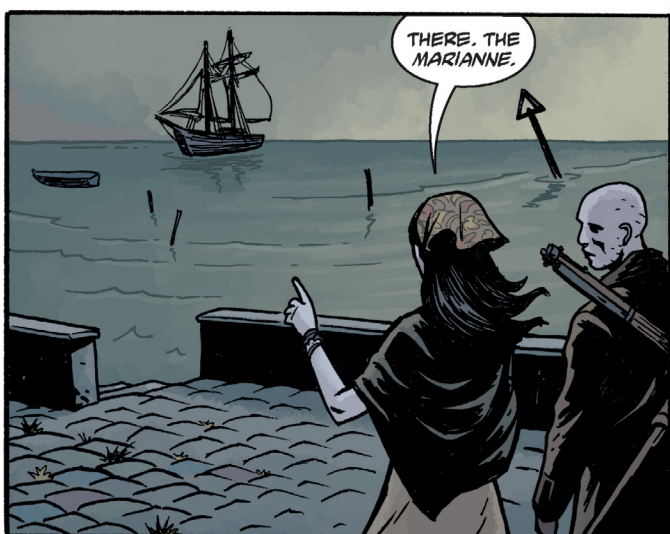
LET'S
HURRY. WE
WANT TO BE
AWAY BEFORE
DAWN.

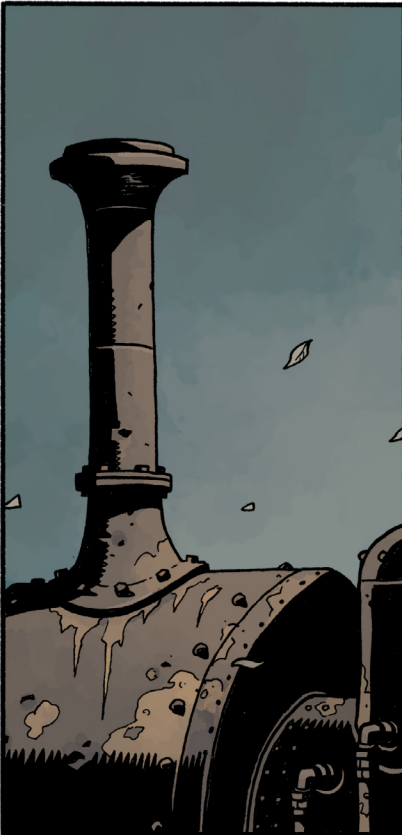


"...THEY WERE SAILED OUT OF THE HARBOR, PUT TO THE TORCH, AND SCUTTLED. 'CLEANSING FIRE,' MY GRANDMOTHER CALLS IT..."

"...NOW THERE ARE VERY FEW LARGE SHIPS LEFT, MOSTLY FISHING BOATS..."









I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M **FINALLY** LEAVING THIS DEAD PLACE.



THERE ARE FAR WORSE PLACES. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE **SEARCHING** FOR--

PARADISE.

IN **THIS** WORLD? IT DOESN'T EXIST.



"WHATEVER COMES OF THIS--"

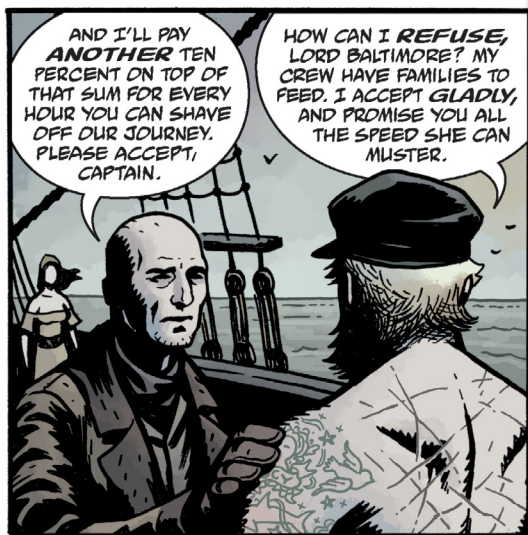
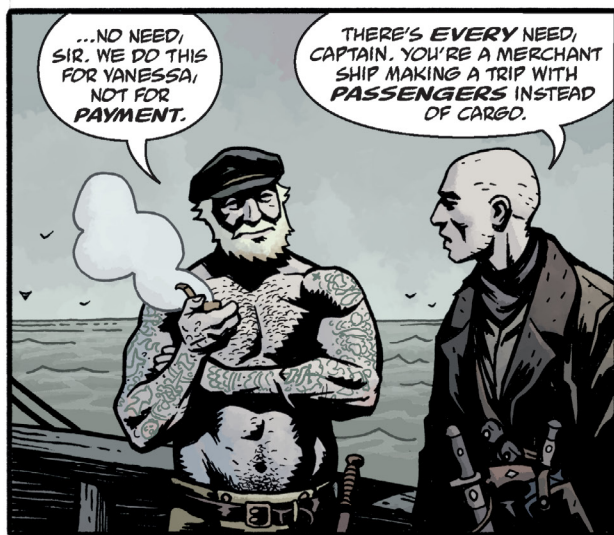
"STOP TRYING TO **FRIGHTEN** ME. I'VE BEEN **HUDDLING** BEHIND LOCKED DOORS, **HIDING** FROM MONSTERS, **PRAYING** THE PLAGUE WOULD NOT TAKE ME."

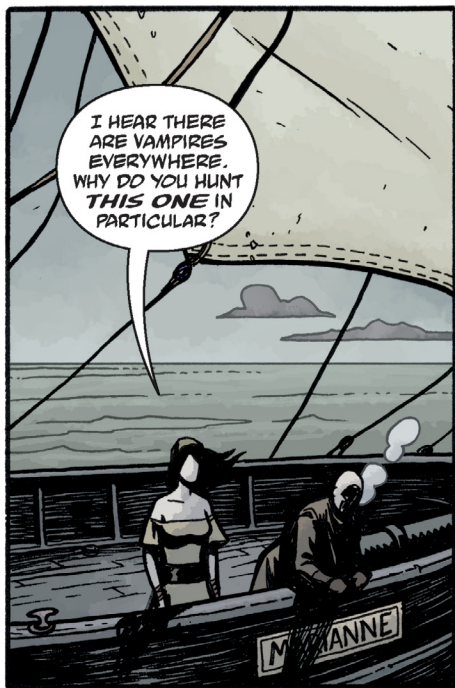


I'M AFRAID TO **DIE**...NOT AFRAID TO **LIVE.**



STUPID, STUPID GIRL.

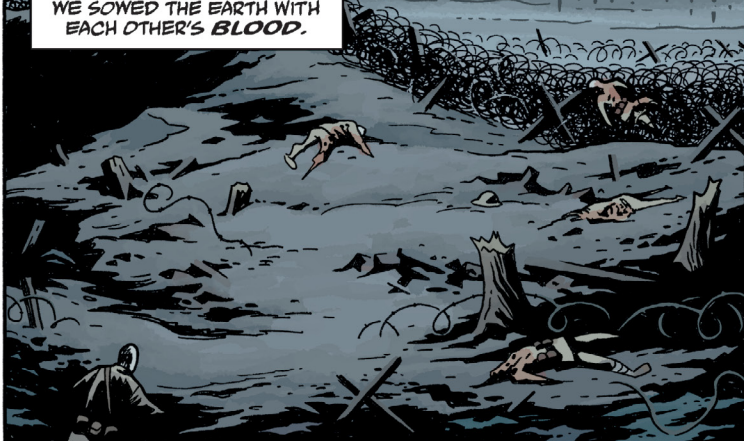




"FOR **DAYS**, THE WAR IN FRANCE HAD STALLED ON A SINGLE PATCH OF GROUND. I FEARED I WOULD FIGHT THERE **FOREVER**, THAT EVERY MAN IN EUROPE WOULD COME THERE TO DIE.



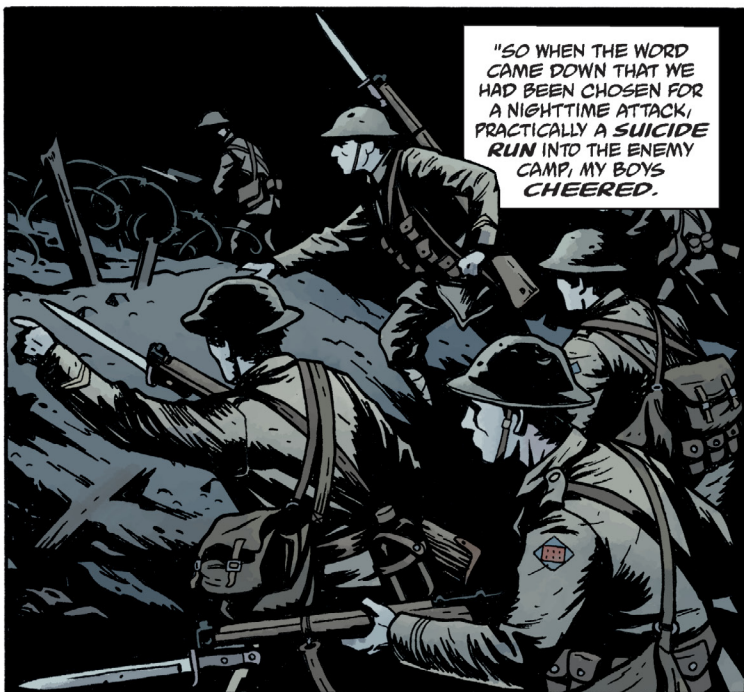
"AT NIGHT THE **HESSIANS** CAMPED IN THE WOODS ON ONE SIDE, AND OUR FORCES ON THE OTHER, AND **BY DAY** WE SOWED THE EARTH WITH EACH OTHER'S **BLOOD**."



"MY MEN DUG MORE **GRAVES** THAN **TRENCHES**."

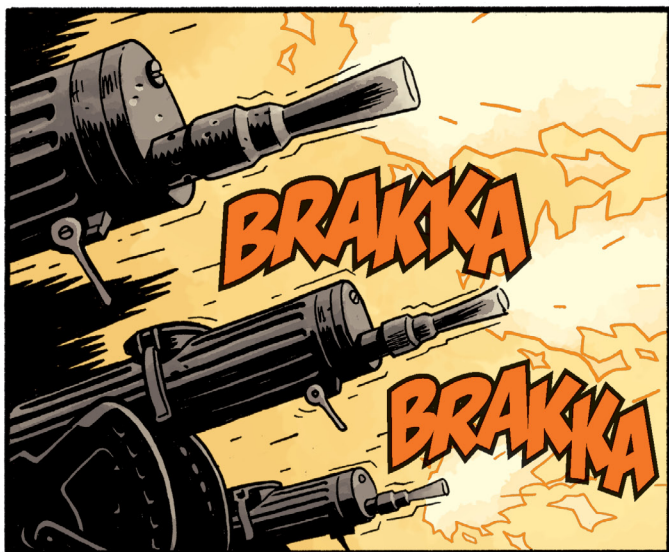


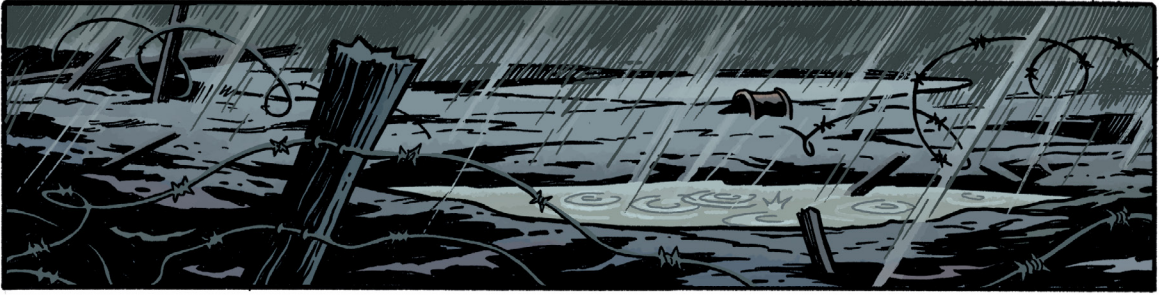
"SO WHEN THE WORD CAME DOWN THAT WE HAD BEEN CHOSEN FOR A NIGHTTIME ATTACK, PRACTICALLY A **SUICIDE RUN** INTO THE ENEMY CAMP, MY BOYS **CHEERED**."

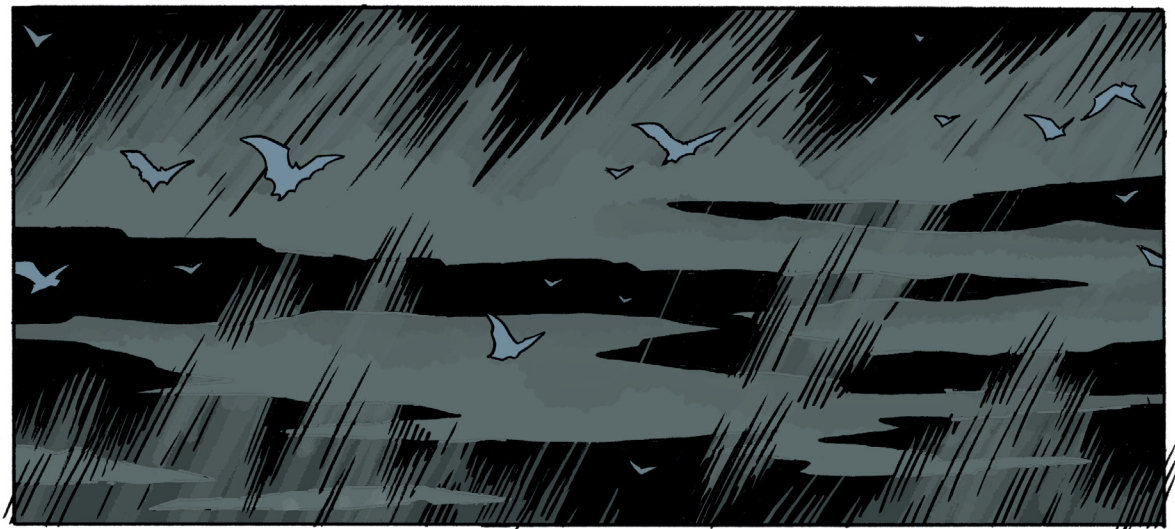


"THERE WERE **NO STARS** THAT NIGHT... **NO MOON**."









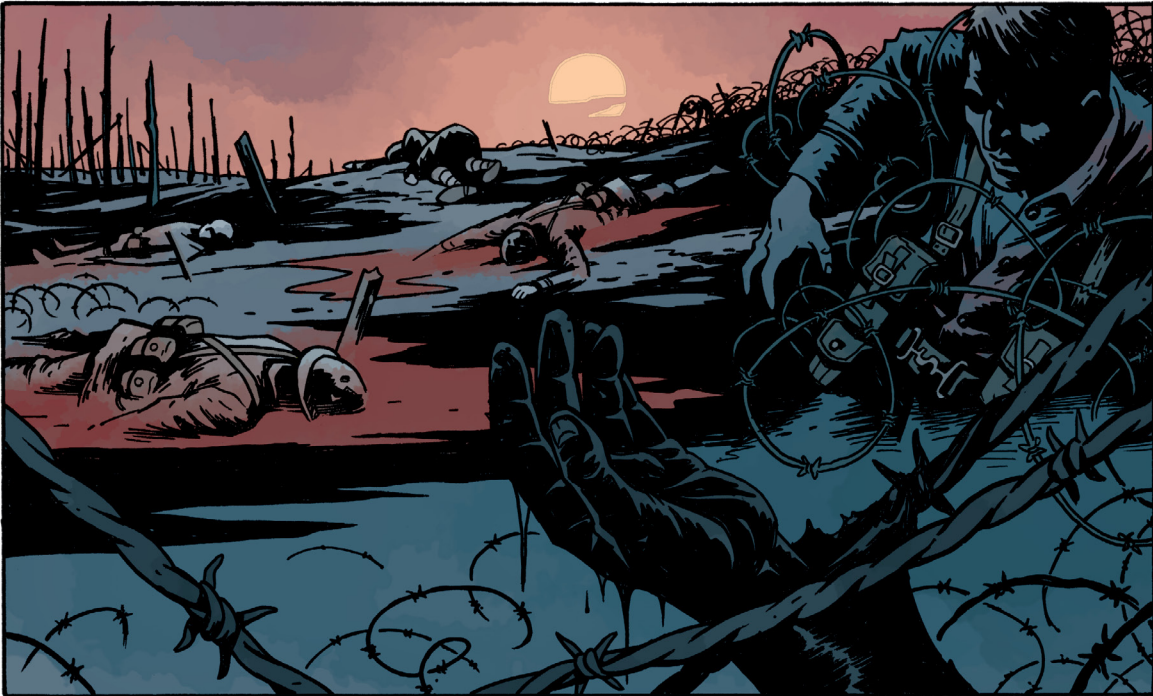




















YOU'VE MADE
A **TERRIBLE**
MISTAKE.



CHAPTER THREE





ANOTHER ONE.



IF *THIS* KEEPS UP, WE'RE GOING TO BE THE ONLY ONES LEFT.



NOT ME. COME MORNING, I'M OFF FOR HOME.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? DESERTING?

THIS WAR'S OVER. THE MEN IN CHARGE JUST DON'T KNOW IT YET. THE PLAGUE'S ENDED IT. MEN ARE PUTTING THEIR GUNS DOWN, GOING HOME TO BE WITH THE ONES THEY LOVE.





WE WERE
CONTENT
TO PREY UPON
THE DEAD AND
DYING, BUT
YOU...



YOU HAVE
MADE IT
A **WAR**
BETWEEN
US.



REMEMBER.



**AWAY,
FIEND!**





GOODNESS.
WHAT'S
HAPPENED
TO YOU,
CAPTAIN?



YOU BE
CAREFUL
NOW.

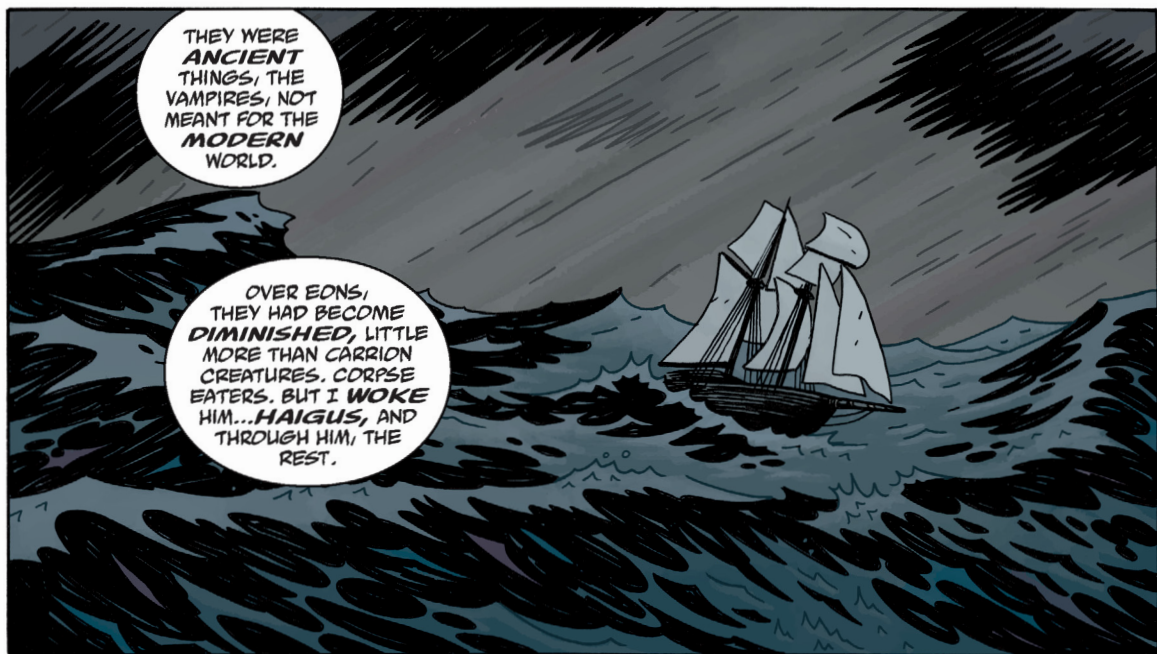
YOU'LL
CATCH YOUR
DEATH.



"THE
PLAGUE
HAD BEGUN.



"TRUTHFULLY, I BELIEVE IT BEGAN
THE VERY **MOMENT** I WOUNDED
THE VAMPIRE. WHEN HE **BLED** INTO
THE SOIL WHERE HUNDREDS LAY
DYING, THE PLAGUE TOOK **ROOT.**"

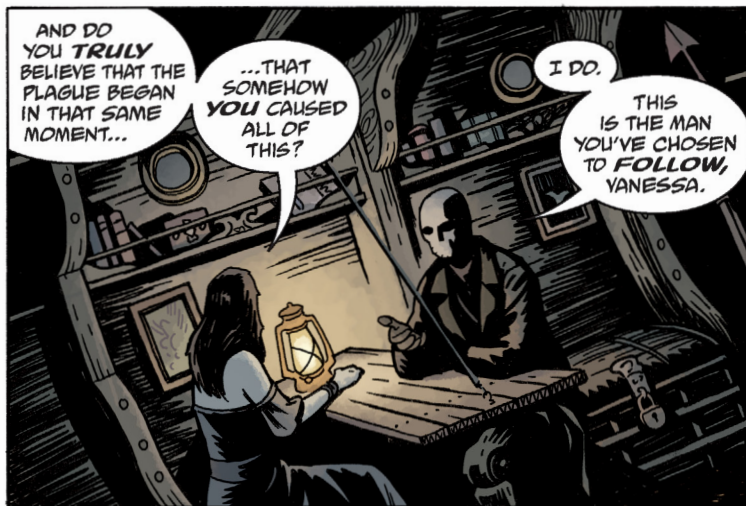


THEY WERE
ANCIENT
THINGS, THE
VAMPIRES, NOT
MEANT FOR THE
MODERN
WORLD.

OVER EONS,
THEY HAD BECOME
DIMINISHED, LITTLE
MORE THAN CARRION
CREATURES. CORPSE
EATERS. BUT I **WOKE**
HIM...**HAIGUS**, AND
THROUGH HIM, THE
REST.



I HAVE
LEARNED A
GREAT DEAL
ABOUT THEM
SINCE THAT
DAY.



AND DO
YOU **TRULY**
BELIEVE THAT THE
PLAGUE BEGAN
IN THAT SAME
MOMENT...

...THAT
SOMEHOW
YOU CAUSED
ALL OF
THIS?

I DO.

THIS
IS THE MAN
YOU'VE CHOSEN
TO **FOLLOW**,
VANESSA.

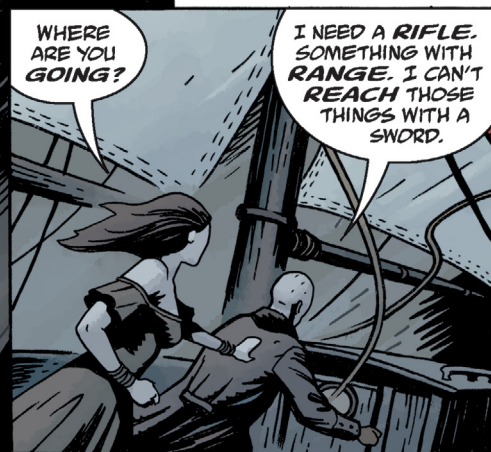
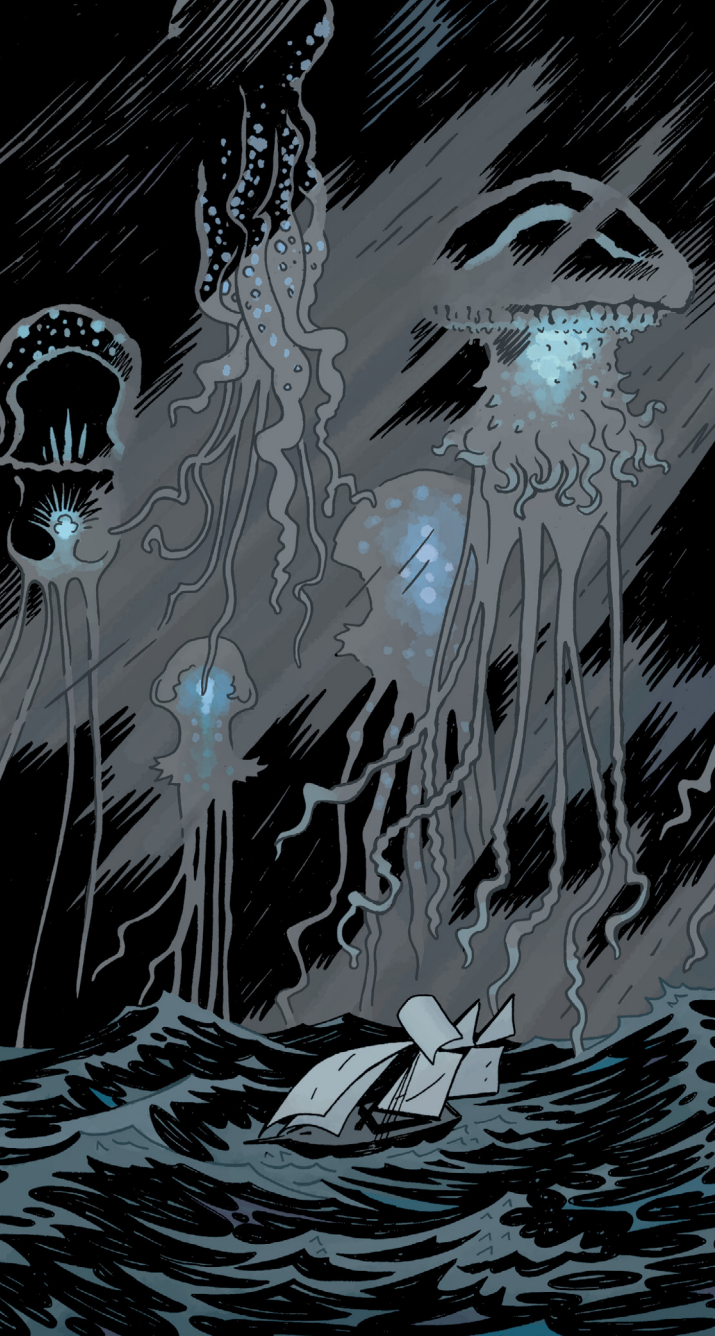


THE **STORM** HAS
WORSENERD. WE
NEED **EVERY** ABLE
HAND **ON DECK**!
BUT **GOD** HELP
US **ALL**...



...THERE
ARE
THINGS
OUT
THERE.





WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

I NEED A RIFLE. SOMETHING WITH RANGE. I CAN'T REACH THOSE THINGS WITH A SWORD.



LEAVE THEM! THEY'RE NOT ATTACKING. IT'S THE **STORM** WE HAVE TO FIGHT!



LORD BALTIMORE, PLEASE!

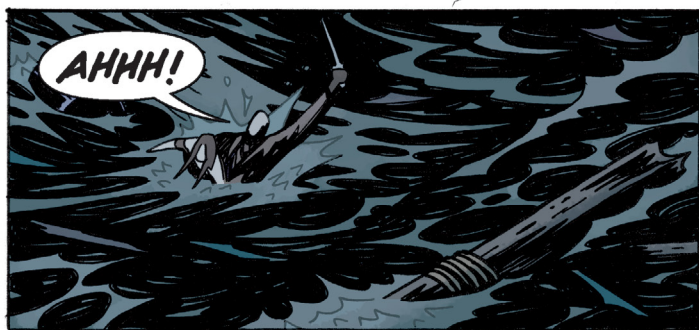
THEY'RE GONE.

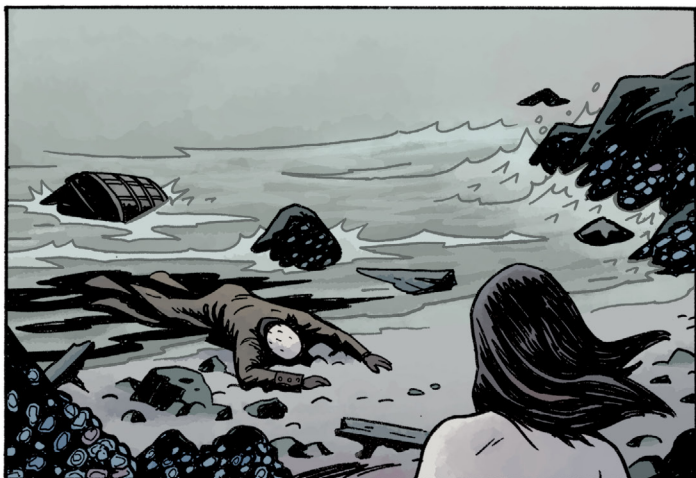


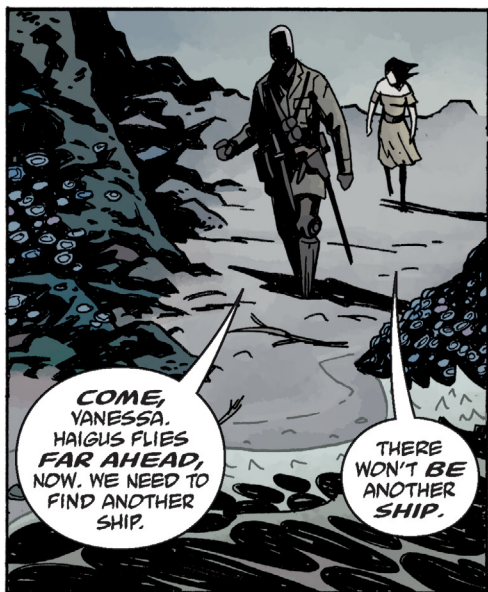
THEY'VE PASSED US BY? THEN THEY WEREN'T HERE FOR US AT ALL.

PERHAPS...



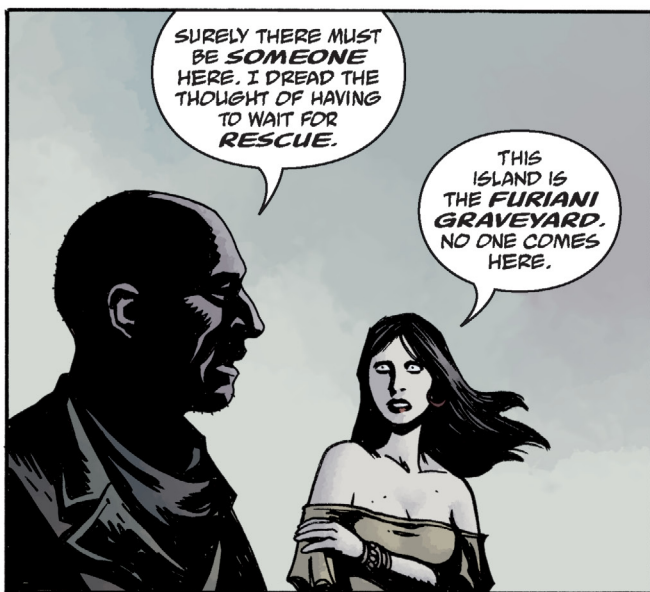






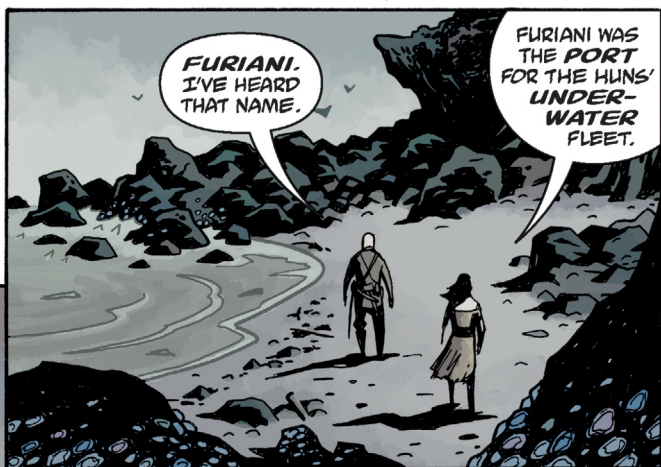
COME, VANESSA. HAIGUS FLIES FAR AHEAD, NOW. WE NEED TO FIND ANOTHER SHIP.

THERE WON'T BE ANOTHER SHIP.



SURELY THERE MUST BE **SOMEONE** HERE. I DREAD THE THOUGHT OF HAVING TO WAIT FOR RESCUE.

THIS ISLAND IS THE **FURIANI GRAVEYARD**. NO ONE COMES HERE.



FURIANI. I'VE HEARD THAT NAME.

FURIANI WAS THE PORT FOR THE HUNS' UNDER-WATER FLEET.



THERE'S NOTHING HERE BUT--



SUBMARINES.



SO MUCH FOR THE KAISER'S SECRET UNDERWATER NAVY.

WE SHOULD NOT BE HERE.



YOU FEEL WE'RE INTRUDING?



THEY SAY THIS ISLAND IS HAUNTED BY THE WAR'S GHOSTS.



OTHERS SAY THAT SOMETHING EVIL WAS HERE BEFORE THE WAR BEGAN, AND THAT'S WHY SO MANY WRECKS END UP HERE.

ARE YOU *WISHING*, NOW, THAT YOU HAD LISTENED TO YOUR GRANDMOTHER?

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *CAUTION* AND *SUPERSTITION*. THAT WOMAN SEES EVIL EVERYWHERE.



THE WAY THE WORLD IS CHANGING, THAT MAY BE MORE *WISDOM* THAN MADNESS.

NOW, LET'S SEE WHAT *ELSE* HAS WASHED UP ON THESE SHORES.

I SUPPOSE A *LIFEBOAT* WOULD BE ASKING TOO MUCH.

I
SUPPOSE. I'D
BE CONTENT WITH
ENOUGH WOOD
FOR A **SIGNAL
FIRE.**

WHAT
ABOUT
THE DEBRIS
FROM OUR
SHIP?

NO,
VANESSA.
WE'LL WANT
SOMETHING
DRY.

SO WE
SHOULD GO
INLAND.

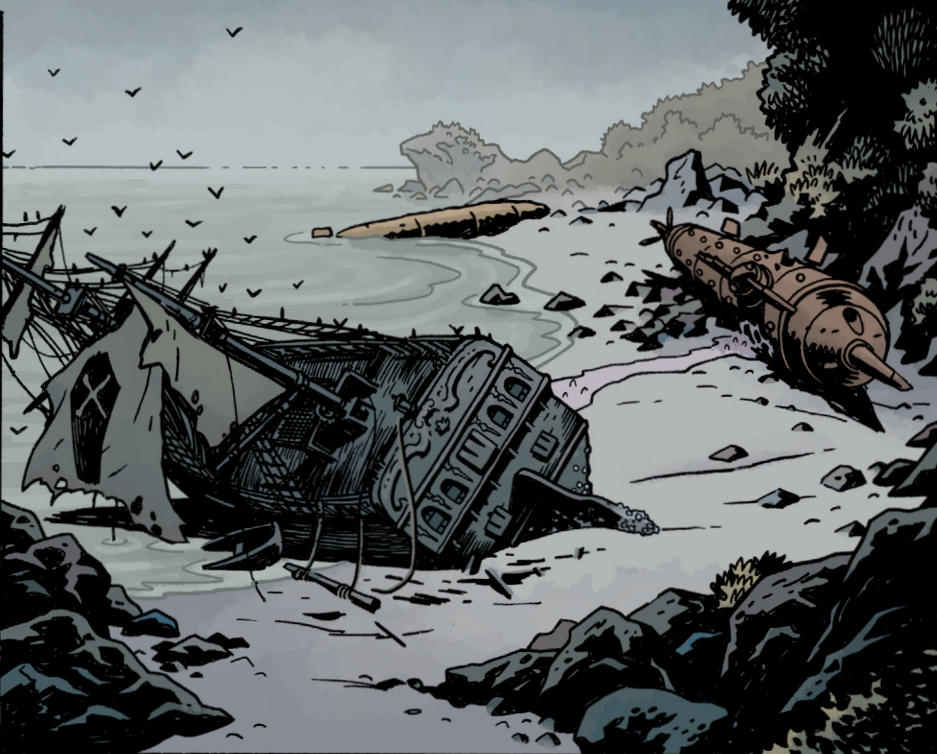
IF IT BECOMES
NECESSARY WE WILL.
BUT IF THERE ARE AS
MANY **WRECKS** HERE
AS THE STORIES SAY,
OUR LUCK MAY BE
BETTER ON THE
SHORE.

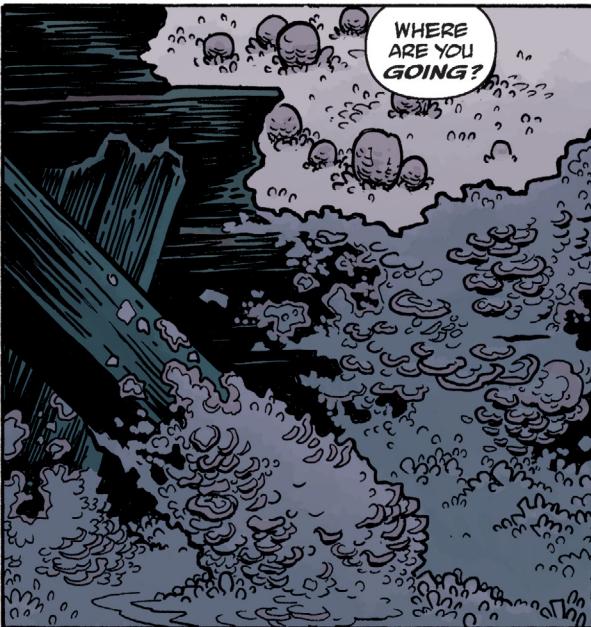
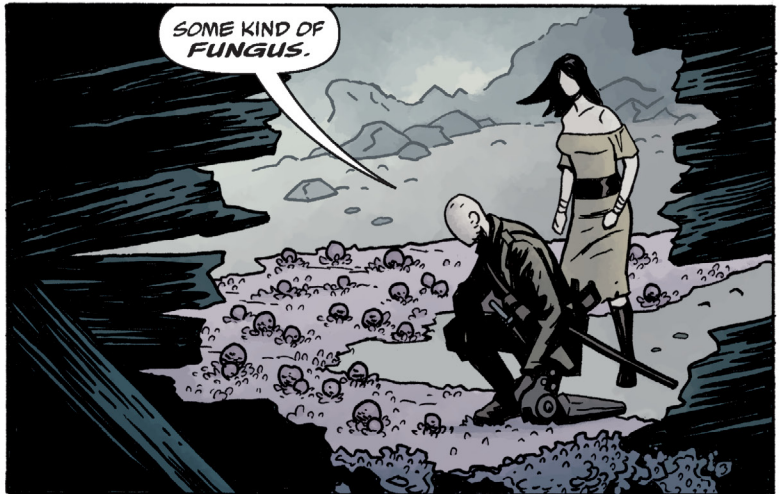
WE
MAY EVEN FIND
SOME KIND OF
SHELTER WHERE
WE CAN SPEND THE
NIGHT. AND IF THERE ARE
OTHER SURVIVORS,
SURELY THEY'LL HAVE
REMAINED NEAR THE
BEACH.

DO YOU
THINK THERE
ARE OTHER
SURVIVORS?

I DON'T
KNOW. BUT IT
DOESN'T **FEEL**
LIKE WE'RE
ALONE, DOES
IT?

NO, LORD
BALTIMORE. IT
DOESN'T.











MY
GOD.

WHAT IS IT?
SOMETHING TO
DO WITH THE
PLAGUE?



I'VE
NEVER SEEN
ITS LIKE
BEFORE.

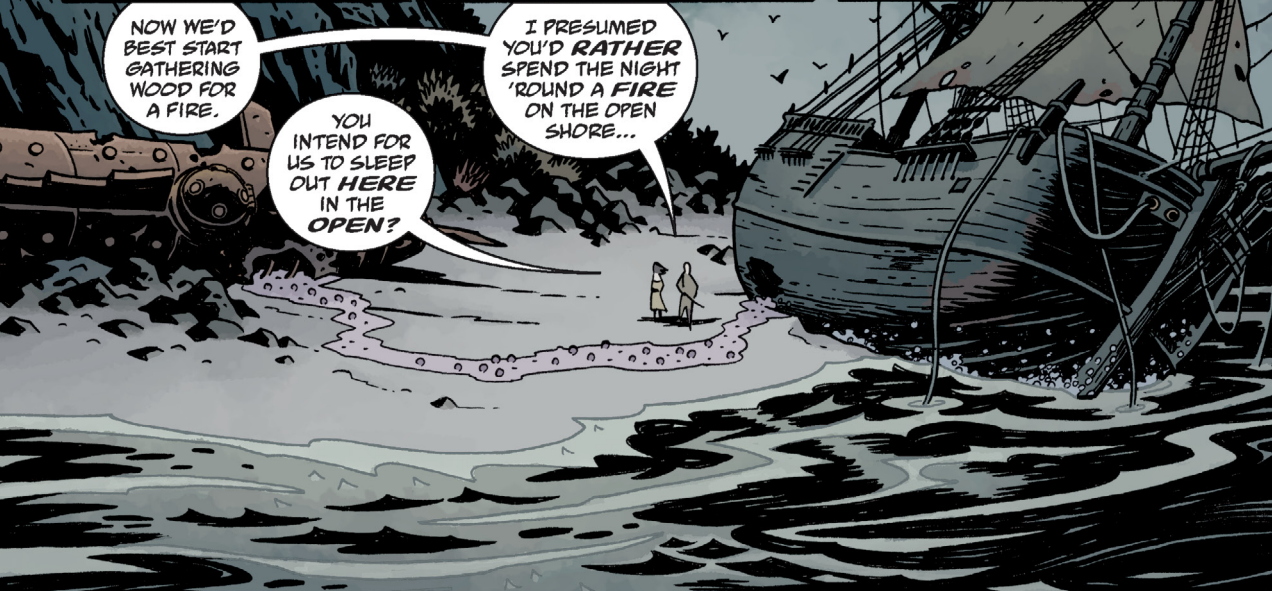


PLEASE
TELL ME
WE'RE DONE
HERE.









NOW WE'D BEST START GATHERING WOOD FOR A FIRE.

YOU INTEND FOR US TO SLEEP OUT HERE IN THE OPEN?

I PRESUMED YOU'D RATHER SPEND THE NIGHT 'ROUND A FIRE ON THE OPEN SHORE...



CHAPTER FOUR





YOU TOLD ME THAT SAILORS THINK THIS ISLAND IS HAUNTED, BUT HOW STRONG IS THEIR FEAR? WILL THE SMOKE OF OUR FIRE BE ENOUGH TO DRAW THEM?

SOMEONE WILL COME, LORD BALTIMORE. THE SAILORS I'VE KNOWN WOULD NEVER IGNORE PEOPLE STRANDED BY A SHIPWRECK. NOT EVEN HERE.

"A FINE SENTIMENT, VANESSA. BUT FEAR CAN CRIPPLE THE STRONGEST OF MEN."



AND WHO IS TO SAY WHAT THEY WILL THINK WHEN THEY SEE THE SMOKE FROM OUR FIRE. THEY MAY TELL THEMSELVES THERE ARE ONLY **GHOSTS** HERE. ONLY THE **DEAD**.

IF SO, IT WON'T BE LONG UNTIL THEY ARE RIGHT.





"I HAD BEEN IN LOVE WITH ELOWEN SINCE WE WERE CHILDREN. WE WED SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE WAR BEGAN."

"YOU KNOW THE HELL I ENDURED ON THE BATTLEFIELD, AND AFTER. YOU KNOW THE THREATS THAT THE SCARRED VAMPIRE HAD MADE."



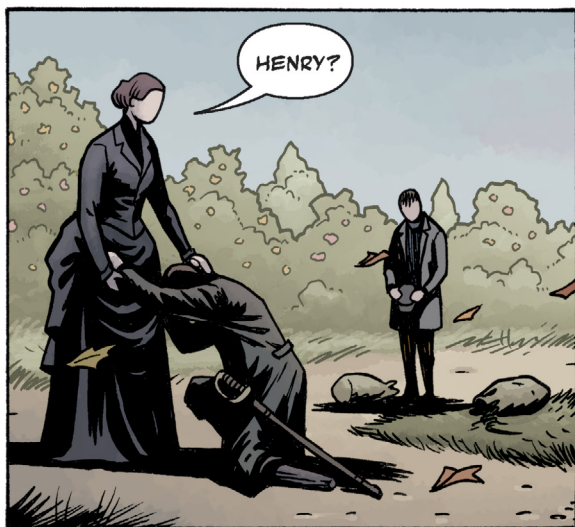
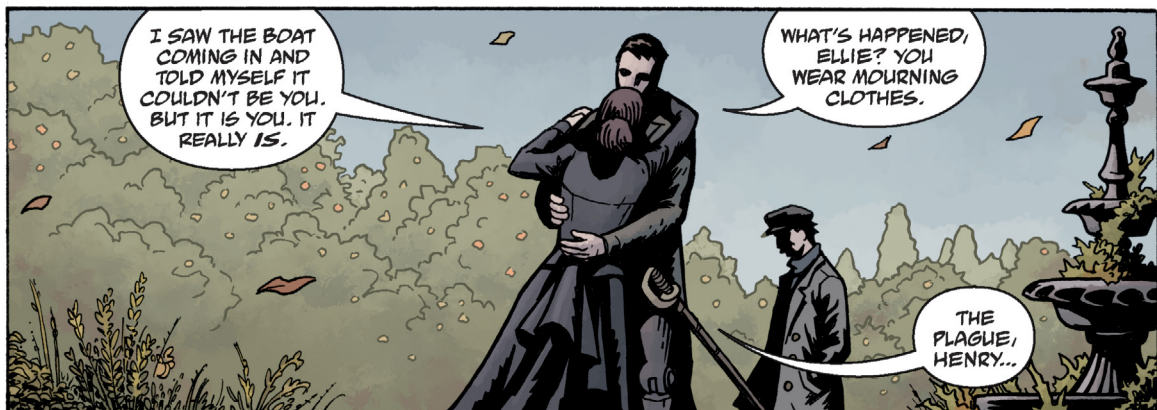
"THE PLAGUE HAD RAVAGED EUROPE, HALTING THE WAR, AS MEN RUSHED HOME TO BE WITH THOSE THEY LOVED, OR TO DIE WITH THEM. THE VAMPIRES MULTIPLIED. SHADOWS STIRRED. BUT I COULD NOT SHAKE THE FEELING THAT HAIGUS'S WARNING HAD BEEN PERSONAL. THAT HIS WAR WAS WITH *ME*."

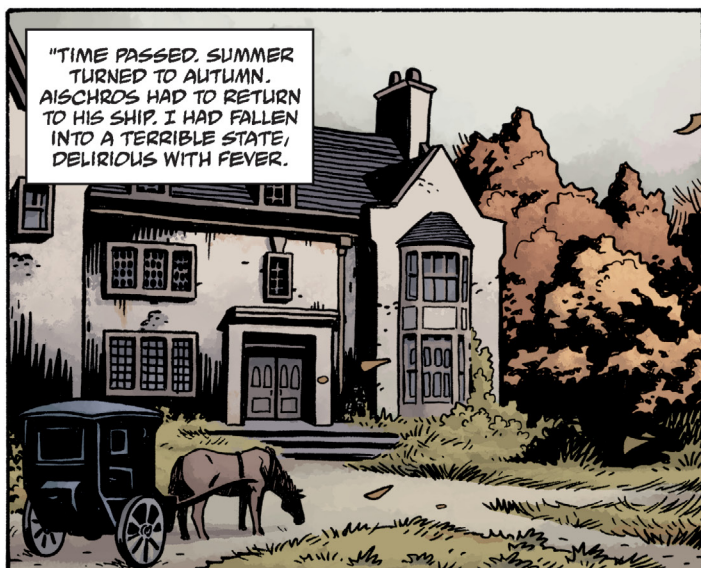


"ON THE JOURNEY HOME, I BEFRIENDED THE CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP THAT SAILED ME ACROSS THE CHANNEL...A BRAVE MAN NAMED **DEMETRIUS AISCHROS**."

"I INVITED HIM TO TRAVEL WITH ME. ONLY AFTERWARD DID I REALIZE I WANTED HIS COMPANY BECAUSE I WAS AFRAID OF WHAT I WOULD FIND WHEN I REACHED HOME."







"TIME PASSED. SUMMER TURNED TO AUTUMN. AISCHROS HAD TO RETURN TO HIS SHIP. I HAD FALLEN INTO A TERRIBLE STATE, DELIRIOUS WITH FEVER.



"I FELT AS IF I WERE A PUPPET CAST ASIDE BY THE PUPPETEER, THOUGH WHETHER HE HAD BEEN GOD OR THE DEVIL, I DID NOT KNOW.

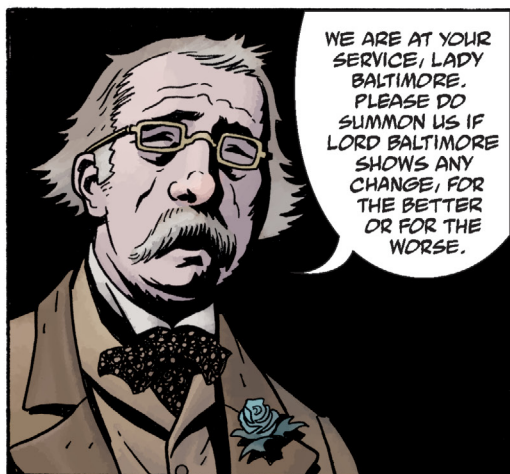


"I HAD BECOME A HOLLOW MAN.



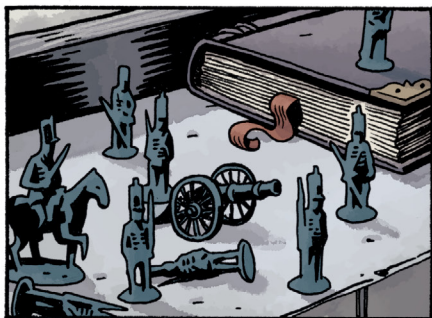
"AND THAT SICKNESS IS ONE THAT NO DOCTOR CAN CURE."

THANK YOU FOR COMING ALL THE WAY OUT TO THE ISLAND, GENTLEMEN.

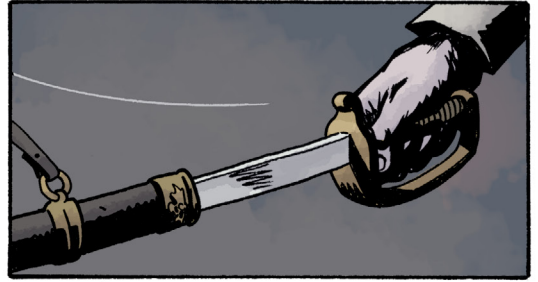


WE ARE AT YOUR SERVICE, LADY BALTIMORE. PLEASE DO SUMMON US IF LORD BALTIMORE SHOWS ANY CHANGE, FOR THE BETTER OR FOR THE WORSE.











ELLIE.









"I HAD SEEN ENOUGH ON MY JOURNEY HOME FROM WAR TO KNOW SHE MIGHT RISE, AND I **WANTED** HER EMBRACE."



...AS I FEARED...



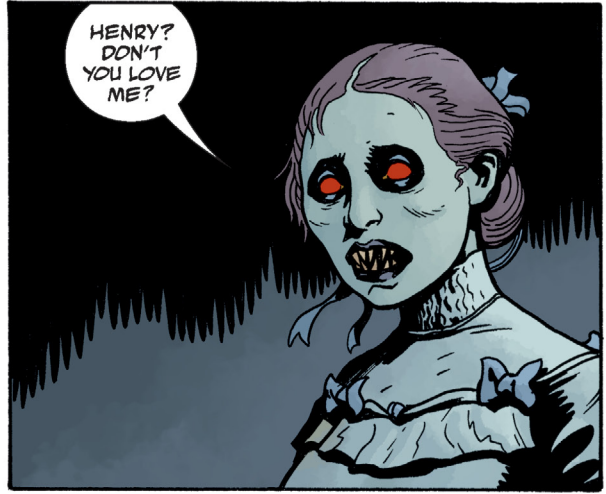
ENOUGH!

DON'T BE A FOOL, LORD BALTIMORE! THIS IS **NOT** YOUR BRIDE. GIVE YOURSELF TO HER AND YOUR SOUL IS **FORFEIT**!



AWAY, FOOL!

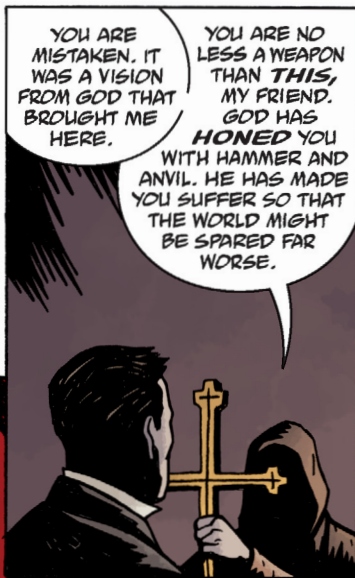
"MY SOUL WAS BLACK WITH GRIEF. I WAS ALREADY DEAD INSIDE. WHAT DIFFERENCE IF MY FLESH WERE TO DIE AS WELL?"



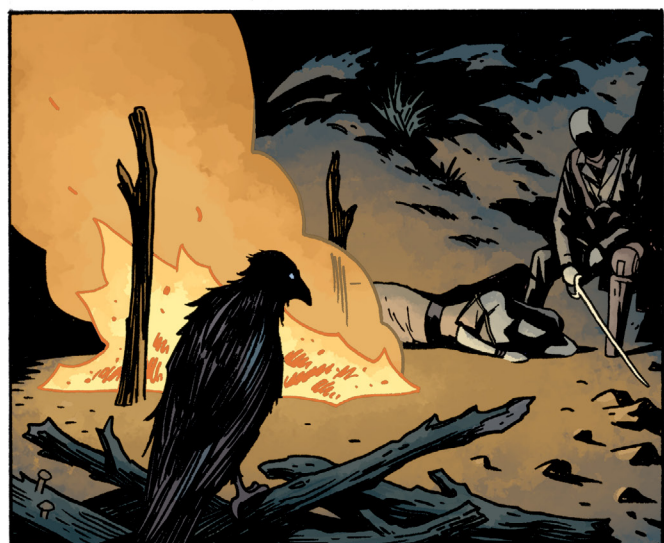














CHAPTER FIVE





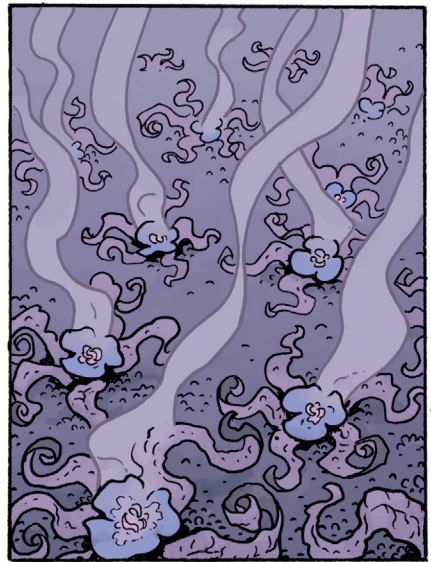
"I THINK
YOU'VE HEARD
ENOUGH OF
MY STORY FOR
NOW..."

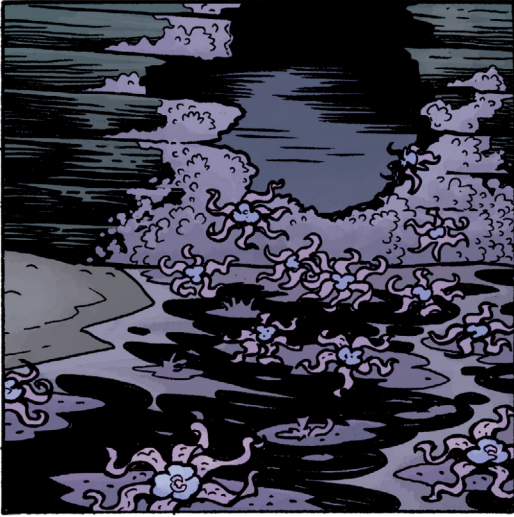


"WOULD THAT
I COULD
RETREAT
FROM IT SO
EASILY."



"BUT THERE
WILL BE NO
PEACE FOR
ME. NOT EVEN
IN SLEEP."













"IT IS A TIME
OF EVIL,
VANESSA."

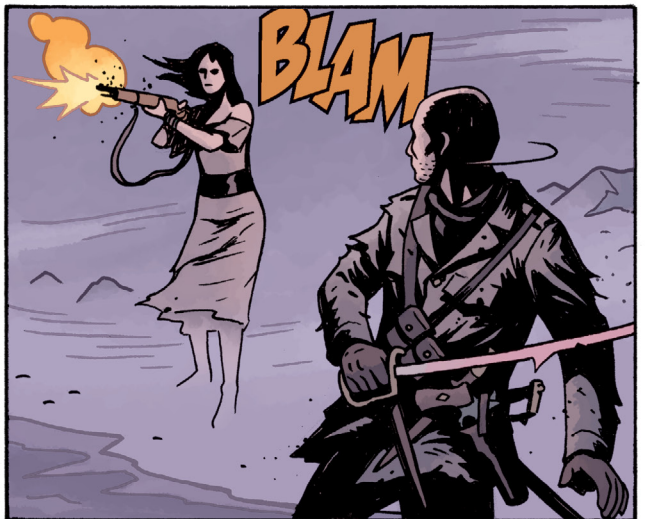


THE PLAGUE
HAS PLANTED
THE SEEDS OF
A THOUSAND
DREADFUL
HARVESTS!

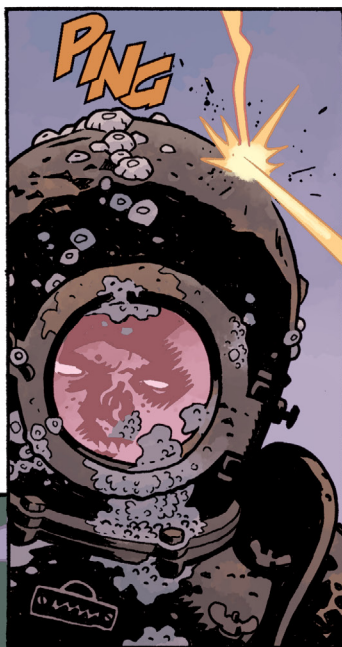
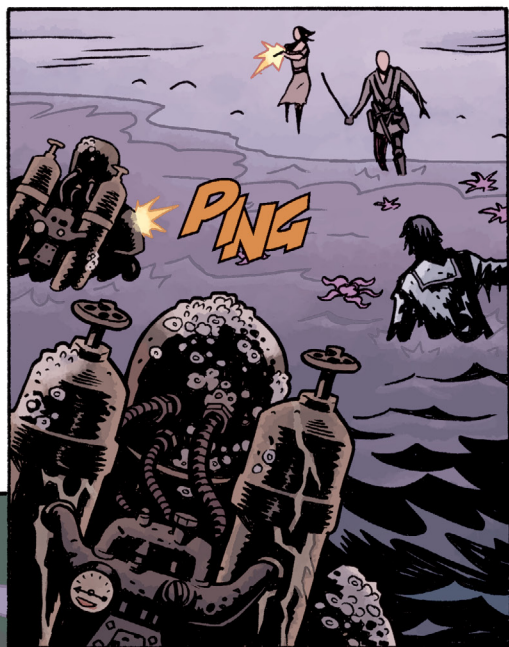
HACK



"NOW WE
REAP WHAT
IT HAS
SOWN."



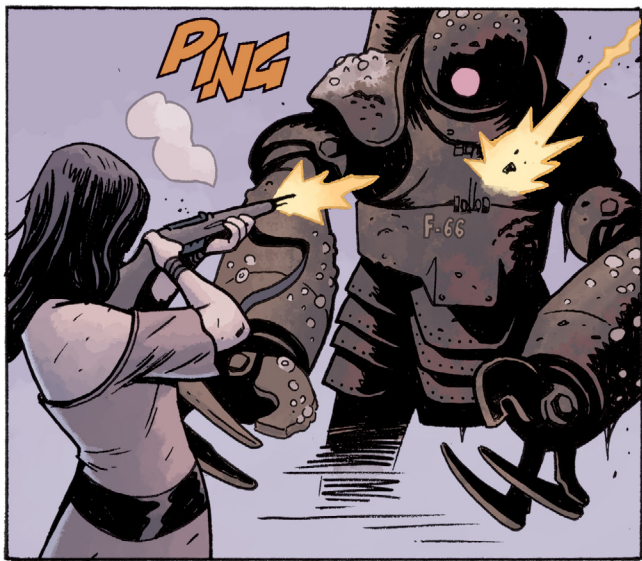
BLAM

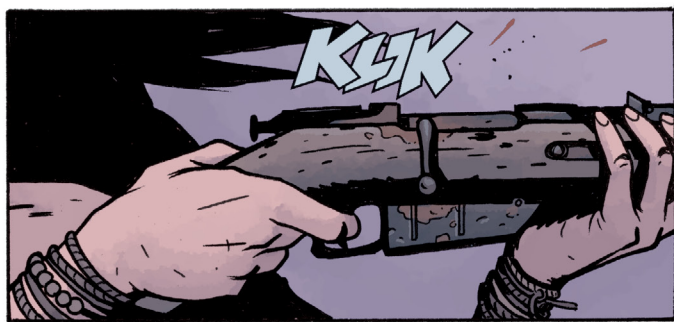


"ENOUGH FOR WAR."

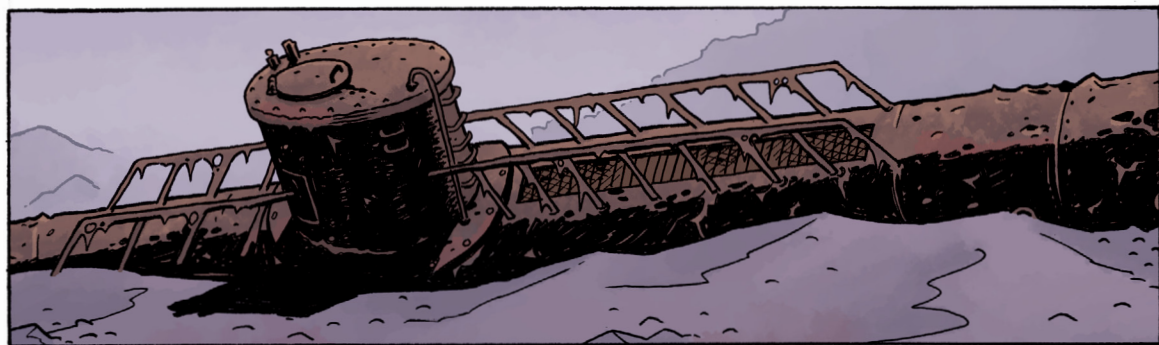
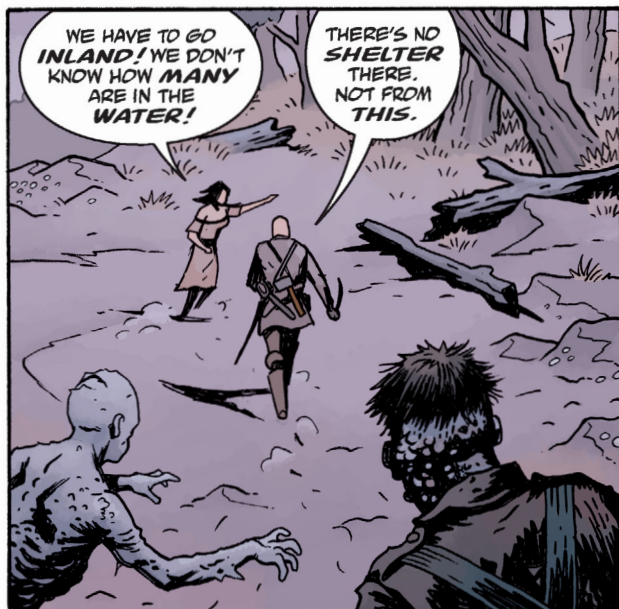




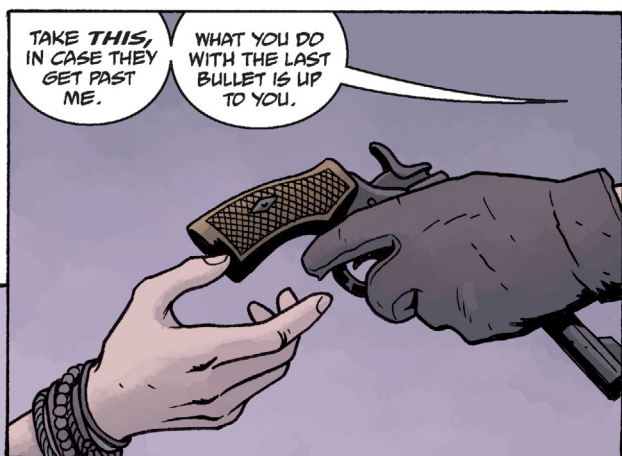
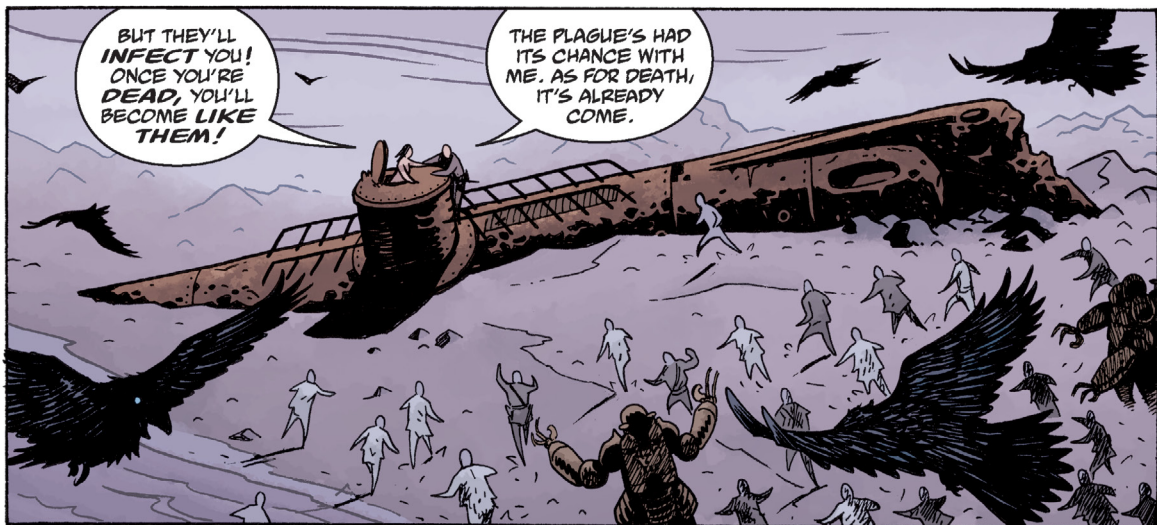
















"WHAT ABOUT
THE REST OF
YOUR FAMILY.
WERE THEY...?"



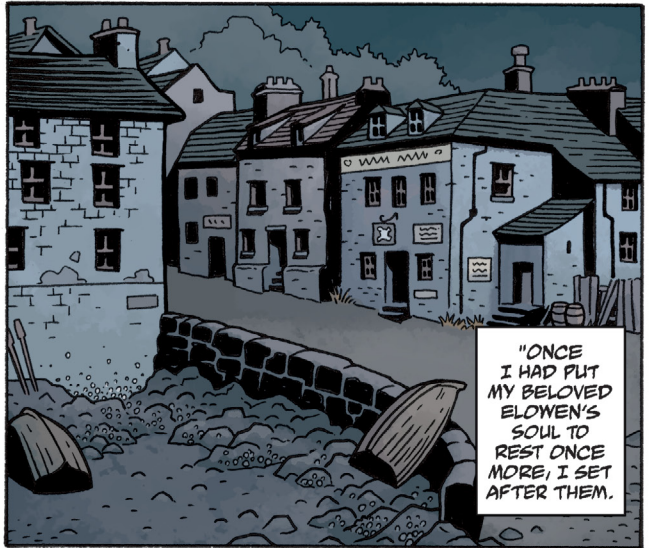
TAINTED?



OH, YES. HAIGUS
HAD WAITED FOR MY
RETURN BEFORE HE
MURDERED MY WIFE AND
TRANSFORMED HER INTO
A FIEND. HE WANTED
ME TO WITNESS
THAT...



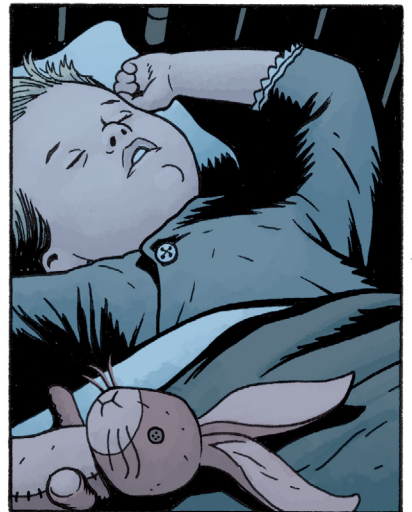
"...BUT
HE HAD
DEFILED
THEM ALL.
INFECTED
THEM WITH
HIS EVIL.



"ONCE
I HAD PUT
MY BELOVED
ELOWEN'S
SOUL TO
REST ONCE
MORE, I SET
AFTER THEM.



"THEY
HADN'T
GONE
FAR."

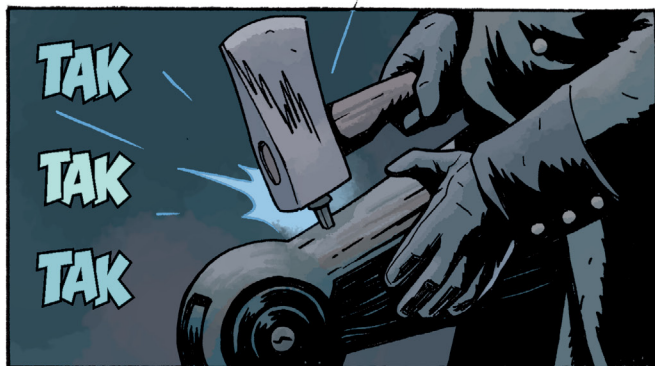


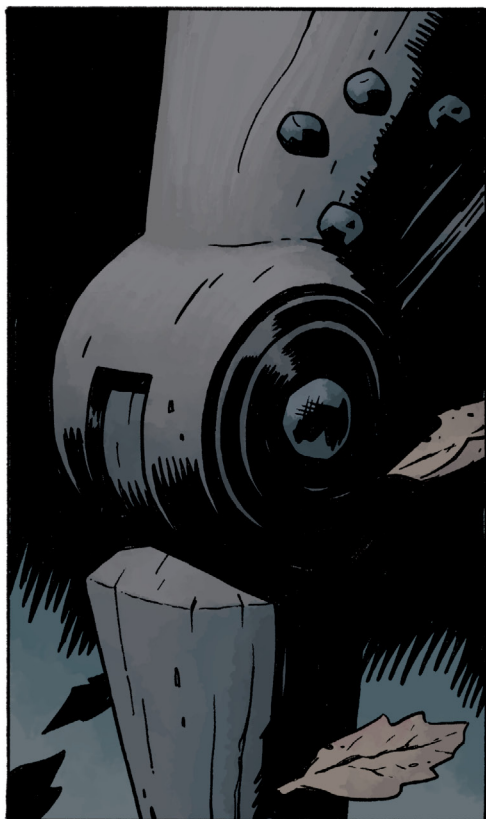
THERE
WILL BE NO
BLOOD FOR YOU
TONIGHT.

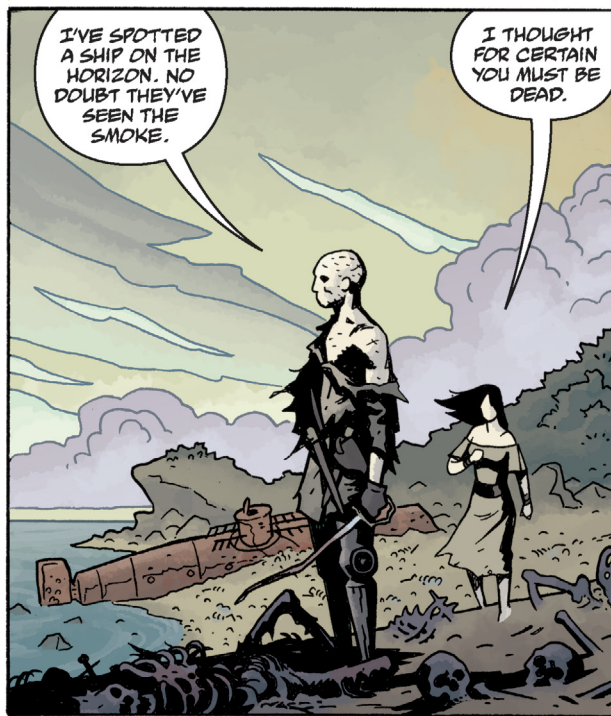
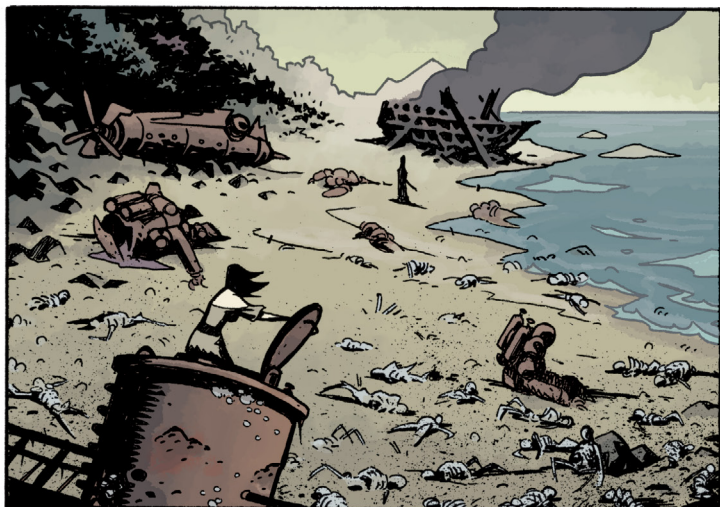
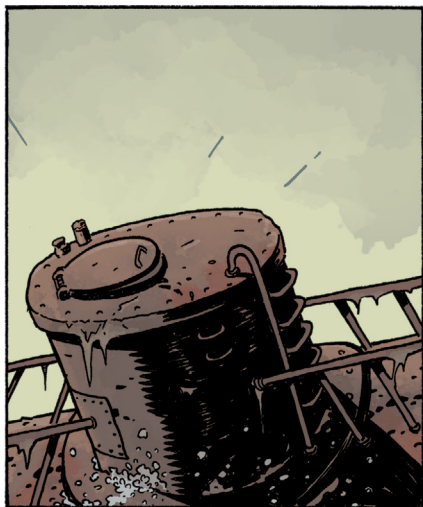
















BALTIMORETM

THE PLAGUE SHIPS

SKETCHBOOK

Notes by Ben Stenbeck

Some early “kite” sketches. They didn’t really need any design work.
Mike just wanted them to look like bats. Which is creepy enough.





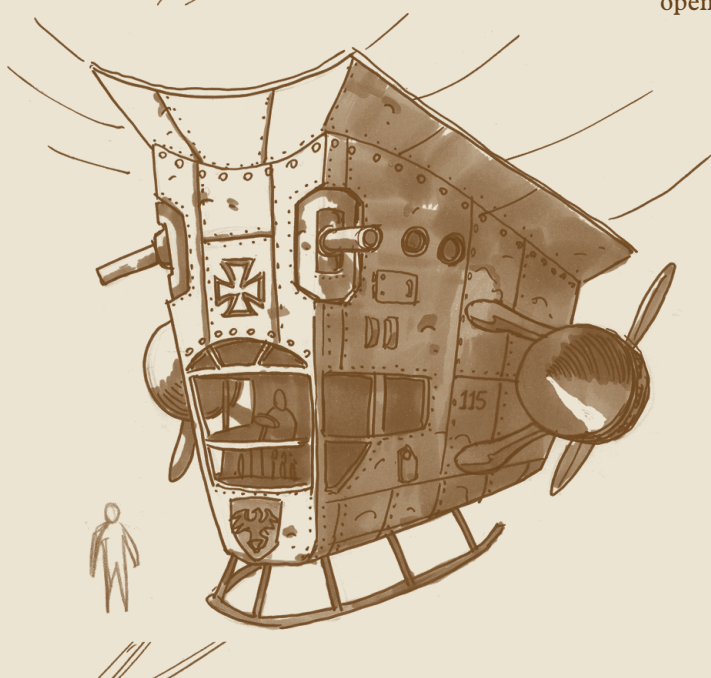
Following: new pinups done especially for this collection.

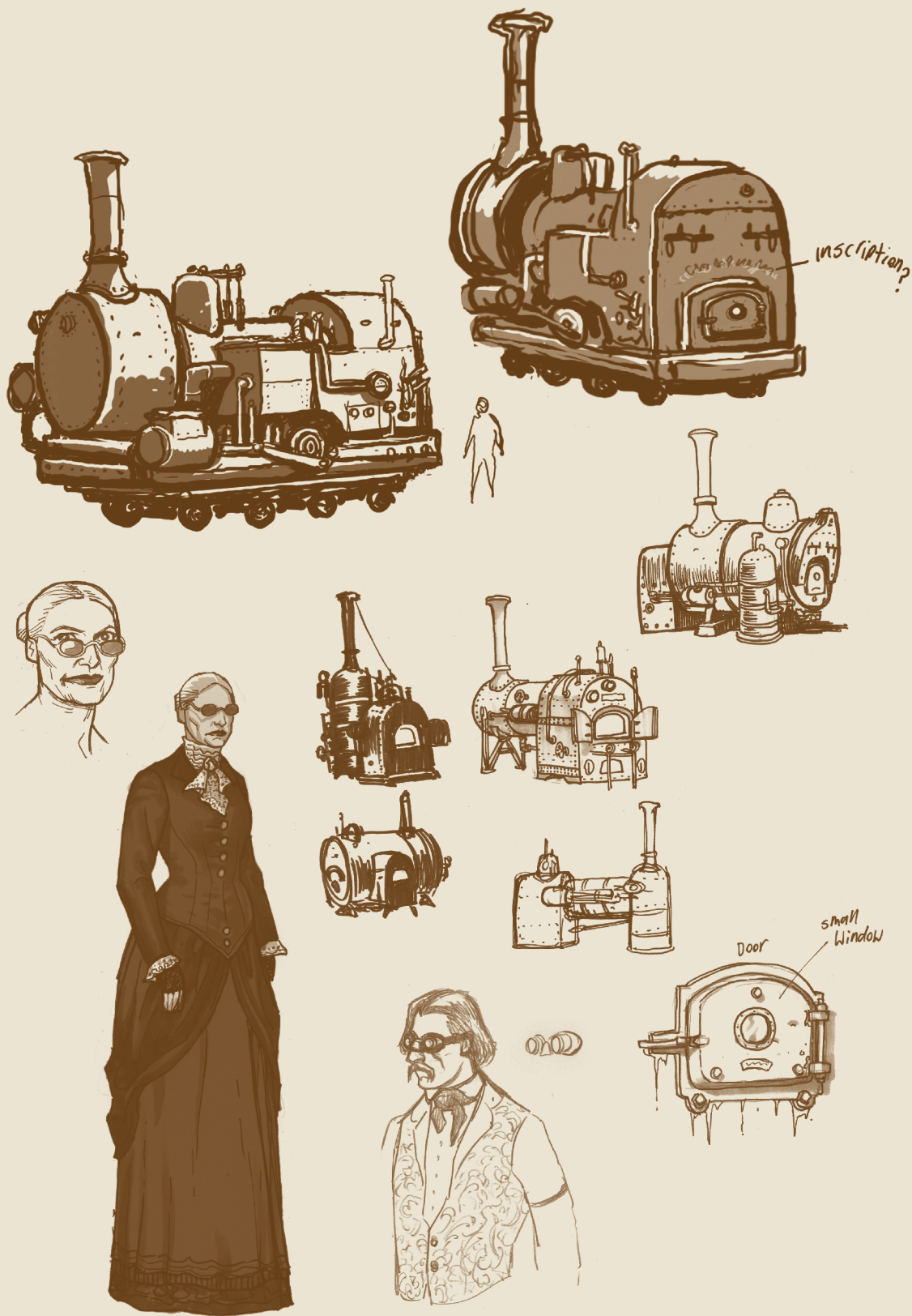






The blimp from the opening sequence.





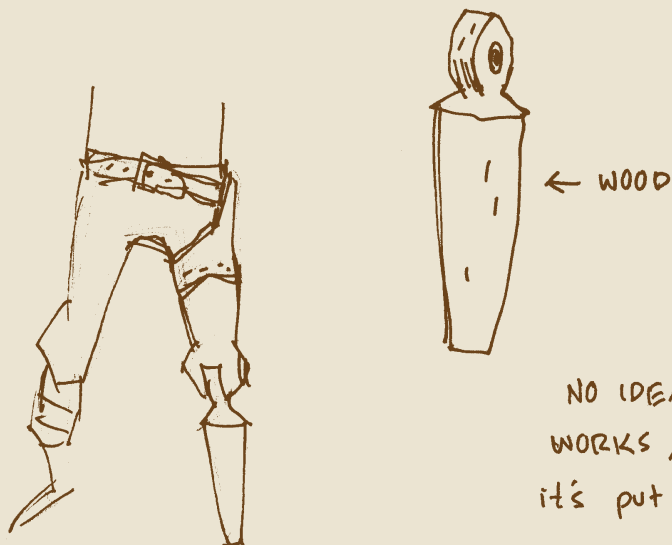
Fulcanelli was going to be a male character, but Mike thought the character would be more interesting as a female. She'll be back. With that weird machine.

Jellyfish things. We decided not to go too weird on their look. And I'm looking forward to drawing more of Judge Duvic. I think this was my first sketch of Baltimore.



BALTIMORE'S LEG

Some kind of belt to go around waist under clothes?



NO IDEA HOW IT ACTUALLY WORKS, but this is how it's put together.

Just as he's had to do with Hellboy's hand, Mike provides a mechanical guide for Baltimore's leg.

Layout for Page 14



Mike

TO SCOTT ALLIE - BEN STENBECK - CHRIS GOLDEN

Page 22 was originally scripted to have more panels, but after seeing Ben's layout, Mike sent this suggestion for simplifying it. The same layout was revisited again on page 99.

—Scott Allie

BALTIMORE

Fungus
Zombies

Hands become
Fused Amorphous
Fungus Blobs



No Hats
(maybe 2)

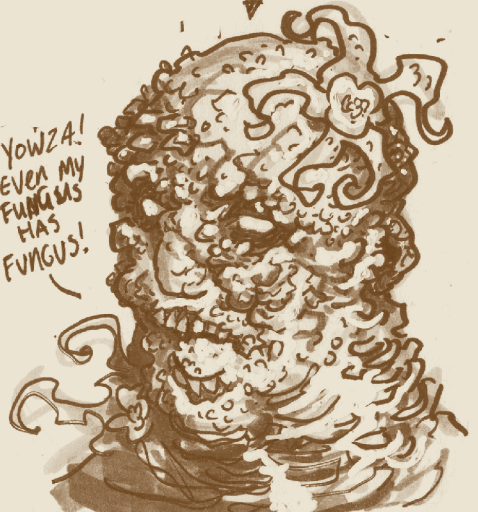


some Have
Just a
little
Fungus

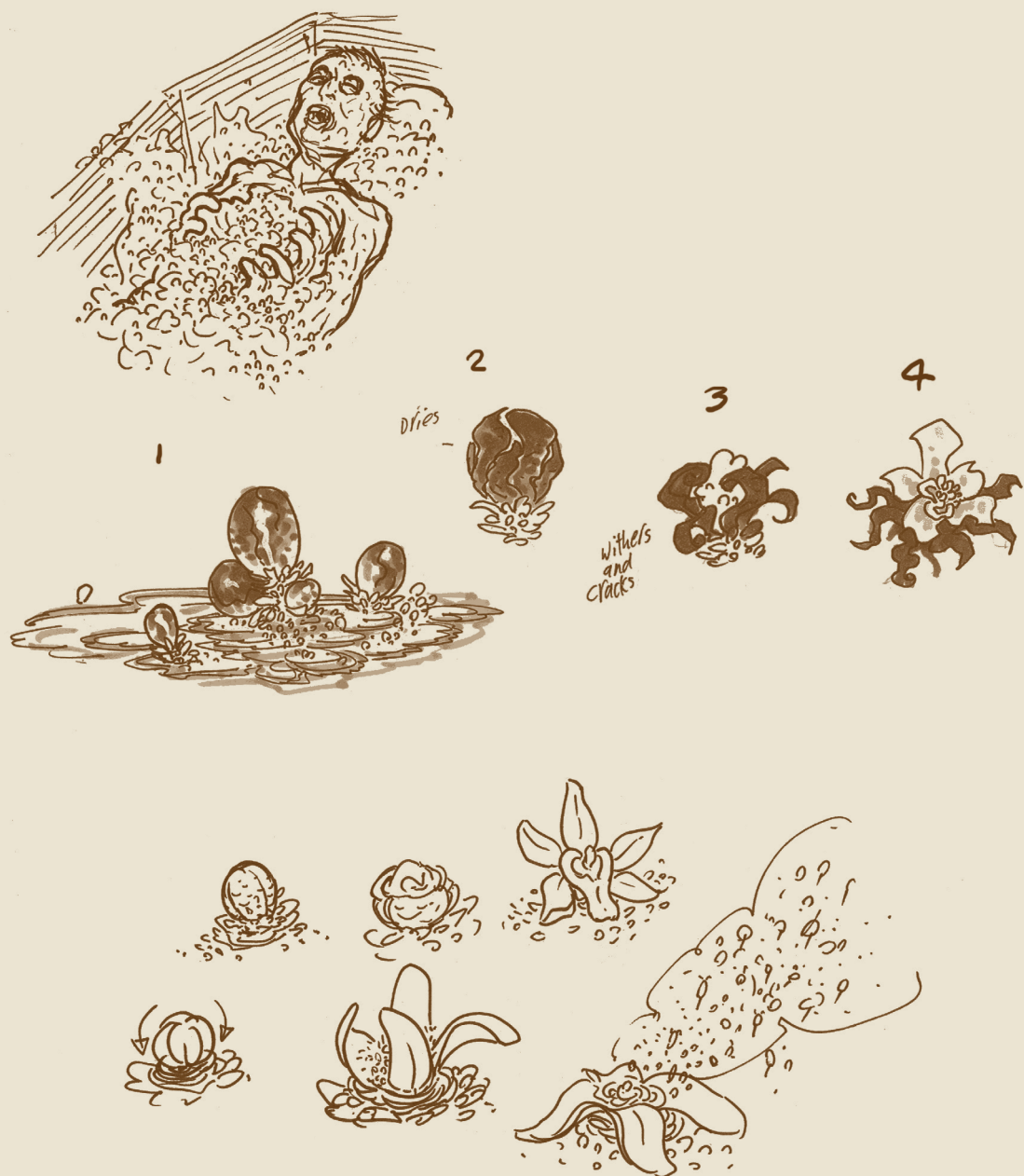


some are
almost
Total Blobs
of Fungus

YOWZA!
EVEN MY
FUNGUS
HAS
FUNGUS!

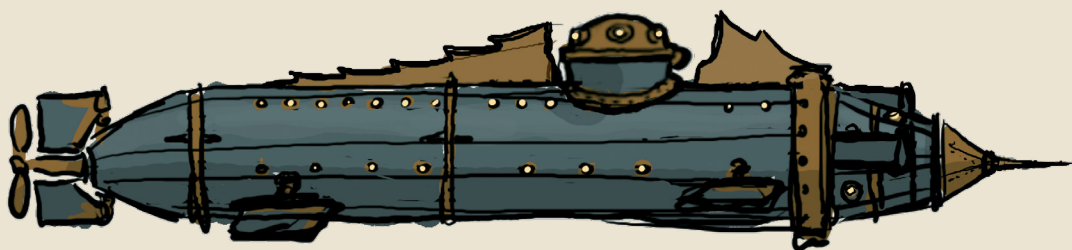
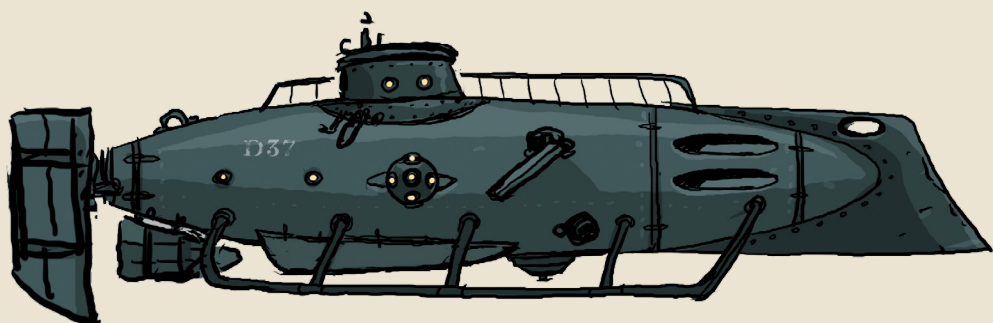


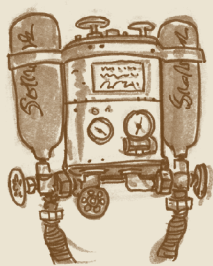
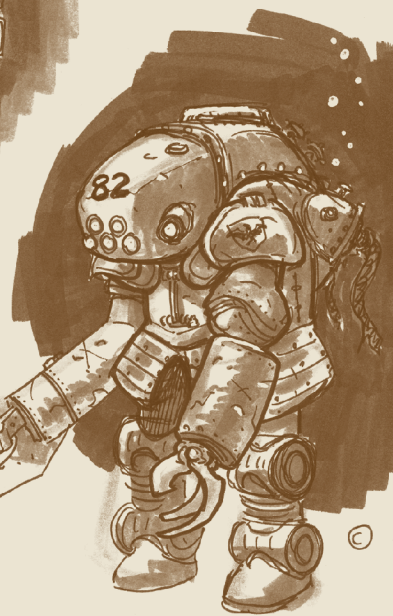
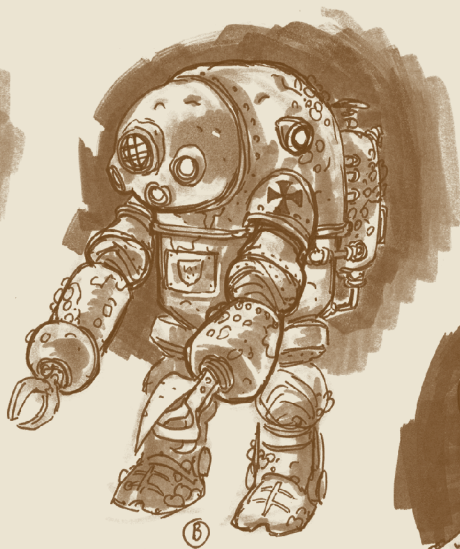
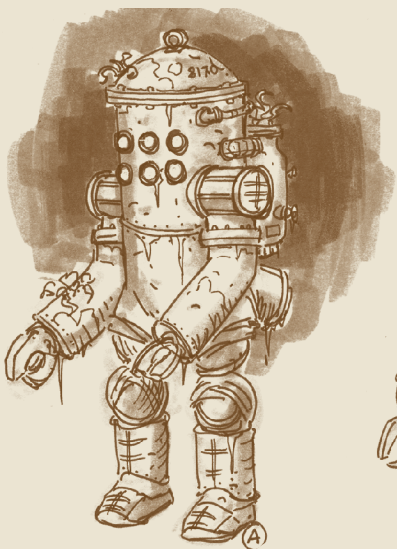
Fungus-creature stuff. This was too much fun.



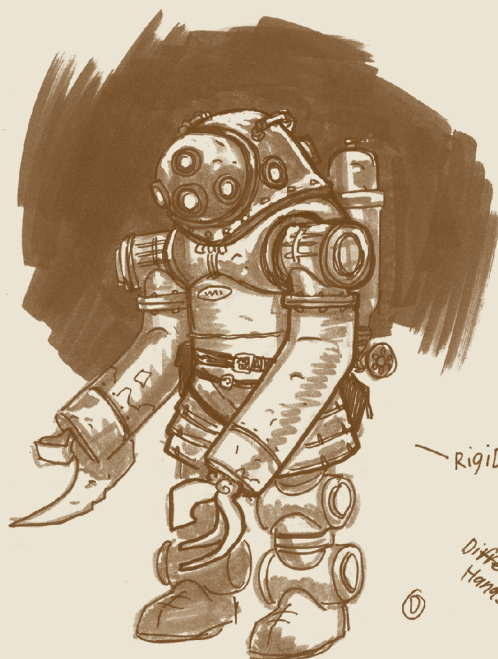
More preparation and design was done for the fungus zombies than any other part of the book.

Dive suits, for doing underwater stuff. This design wasn't clunky enough.
So then I did the ones on the next page.



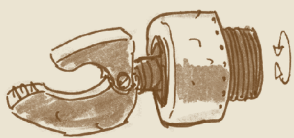


can
opener

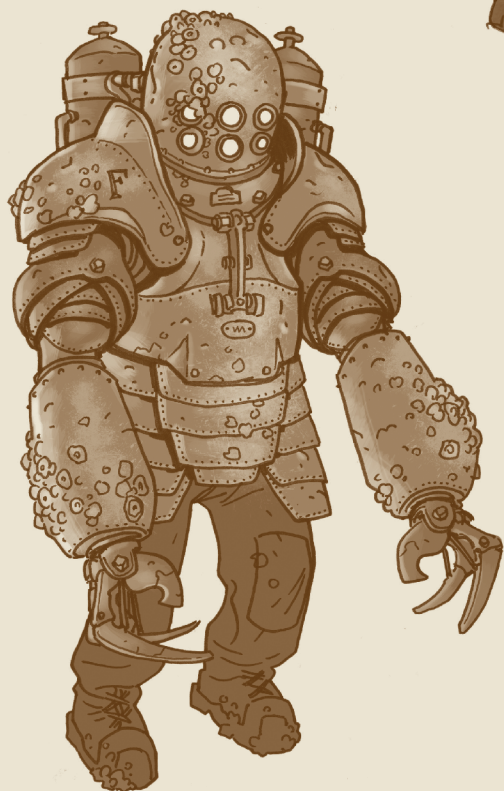
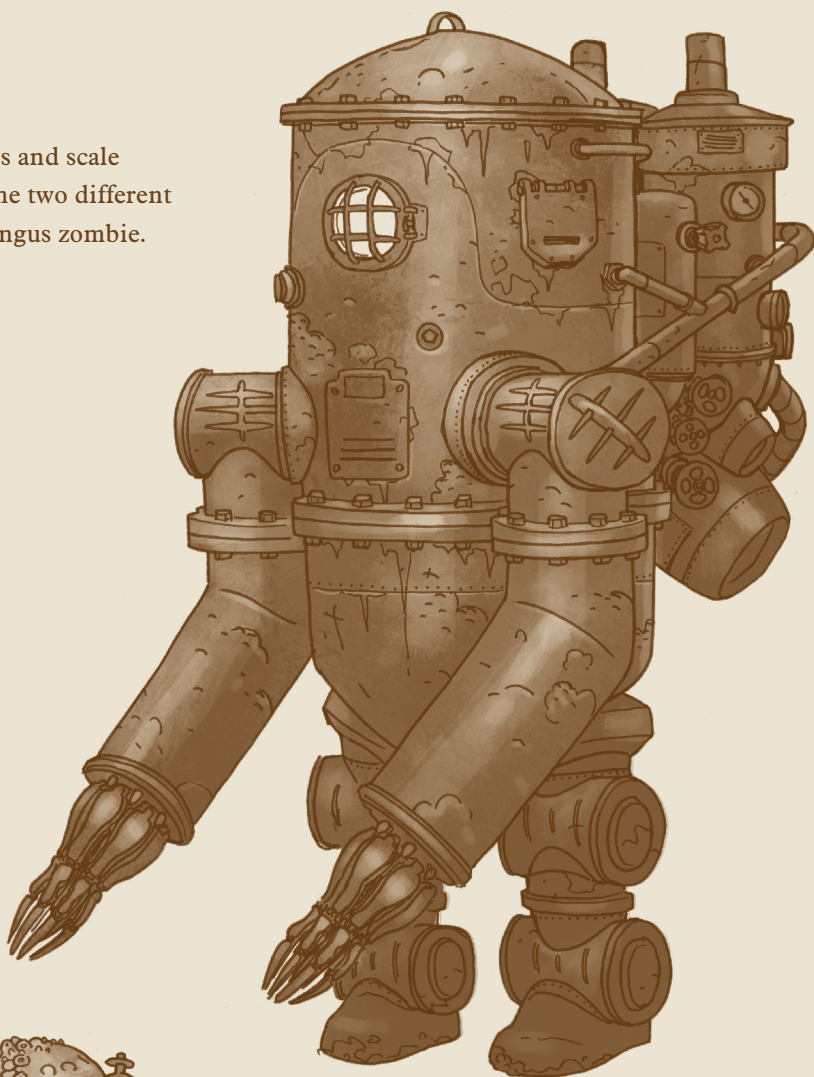


Rigid Arms

Different
Horns



Final designs and scale comparisons of the two different suits. Also a fungus zombie.



From the award-winning, best-selling writers of
Baltimore; or, *The Steadfast Tin Soldier and the Vampire*,
Mike Mignola and Christopher Golden.



“The tone of the writing perfectly matches the tone of the artwork and the two combine to create an instant impression of who Lord Henry Baltimore is, why the world he lives in has turned him into such a grim man, and how remarkable it is that he can still be so determined to carry out his hunt.”

—ComicsAlliance

“Dark Horse vowed that they would do vampires right, and *Baltimore: The Plague Ships* is proof positive that they’ve lived up to their word.”

—Newsarama

“*Plague Ships* moves forward with the ferocity and drive of its unstoppable protagonist, and throws at you all the visual horrors you would expect of *Hellboy* creator Mike Mignola, and all the mad, stomach-churning concepts that are the stock-in-trade of novelist Christopher Golden.”

—Joe Hill, from his introduction



DarkHorse.com